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A Review of Religion, Politics, and Culture

December 7, 2001

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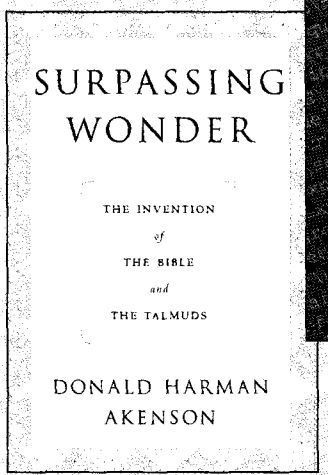

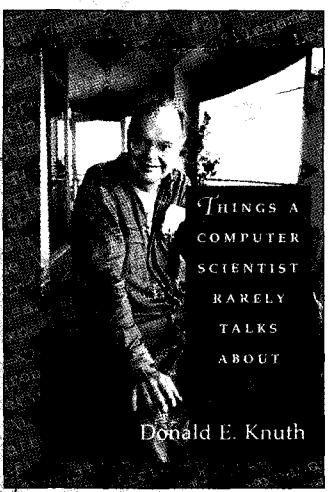

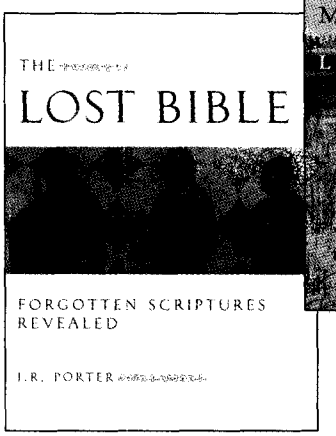

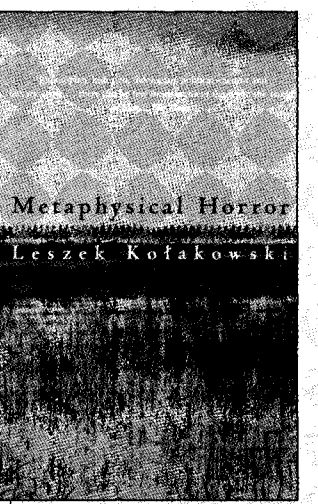

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COMMONWEAL

December 7, 2001 / Volume CXXVIII, Number 21

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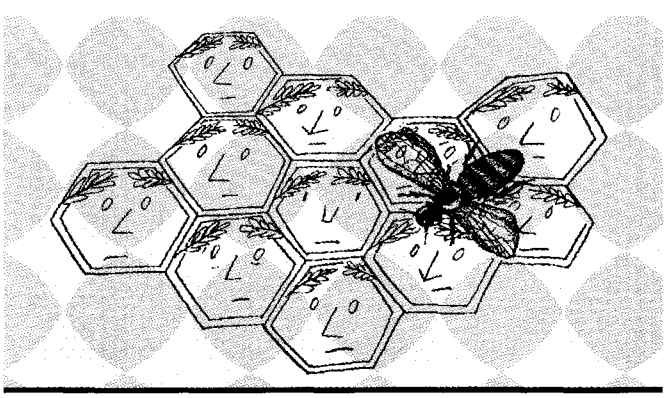

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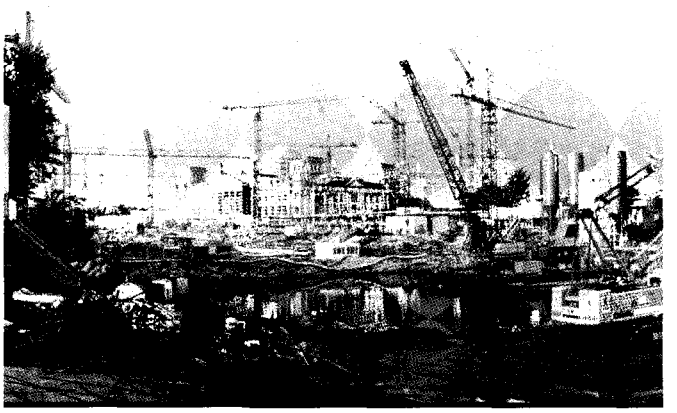

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To the Editors

Profile in courage

I wanted to thank you for the profile of Ambassador Robert White ("Death & Lies in El Salvador," October 26). His comments reinforced a belief I have long held that American foreign policy should be tied to the principles we profess to believe in.

I came away with the impression that White's epiphany in El Salvador was triggered by the deaths of the four American church women; that he began to see that American policy was giving aid and comfort to the enemies of democratic change. I have come to believe that when governments rob their people of the hope for a better life, they sow the seeds of rebellion. White's comments reinforced that belief.

Thank you for the profile.

MIKE FARENELL
Schenectady, N.Y.

Francis revisited

I appreciated Patrick Jordan's review of books on Saint Francis ("One of a Kind," October 26). It prompted me to revisit my old 1957 Image Book of Chesterton's *Francis*, which has a big "65 cents" printed on the cover (now $10.95, I see).

I was especially grateful for the piece because it came while I was reading Gerard Straub's *Sun and Moon over Assisi: A Personal Encounter with Francis and Clare* (Saint Anthony Messenger Press, 2000), which I found absolutely absorbing.

Valerie Martin's book *Salvation* is evidently a worthy contribution to the Saint Francis volumes, but it is hard for me to believe that it would match the impact of Straub's book.

Commonweal is doing a great job of nourishing this Lutheran soul, and I thank you for that!

ARTHUR SIMON
Colmar Manor, Md.

Work left to do

In his November 9 article, "A Cloak of Many Colors," Father Andrew Greeley describes a problem of great significance for the future of Catholicism. Nearly two generations after Vatican II, he says, we find ourselves trapped (sacramentally) between the "empty rituals of the past and a bare-bones, low-church Protestantism." Our sacramental heritage has become impoverished because we have discarded too much of it. We know now we should have done more to reform those parts of our sacramental heritage that were lifeless and less to eliminate them. But nowhere does there appear a sustained effort to do so.

In 1992, Margaret O'Brien Steinfels wrote about another trap we Catholics have gotten ourselves into. She described it as "The Unholy Alliance between the Right and the Left in the Catholic Church" (*America*, May 2, 1992). I believe the two traps are related.

The Catholic Right identified the sacramental diminishment problem early on and has argued, not for a reform of the church's sacramental life, but for a restoration of pre-Vatican II sacramental practices. Greeley is right to oppose the restorationist agenda, and the Catholic Left is too. Unfortunately, though, the Left seems to see any move toward reestablishing a richer sacramental life as a capitulation to the Right. Most of the energy of the Catholic Left has been focused on issues of justice and church governance. When it comes to sacramental life and practices, the Left has been content simply to thwart the Right's restorationist agenda.

Ironically, the Catholic Left's greatest opportunity for influence lies precisely in the sacramental area it has for the most part neglected. Reforms of the sacramental heritage of Catholicism, if they are to occur, must come from the Left; reforms of church governance, if they are to occur, must come from the Right. This is simple political realism. For just as welfare reform became possible only when President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, took the lead, and a major tax increase and a reduction in defense spending became possible only when President George H. Bush, a Republican, took the lead, so too will reforms within the church become possible only when those who have veto authority decide to lead the reform rather than oppose it.

Greeley concludes his article with "a modest plea that someone get to

(Continued on page 28)

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War & the common good

Events move so quickly and unpredictably in Afghanistan that the concerns of today's headlines are often rendered superfluous by tomorrow's. This has made life difficult for journalists and commentators. Just as criticism about the ineffectuality of the U.S. bombing campaign was mounting, the assault on the Taliban by the U.S.-backed Northern Alliance swept Osama bin Laden's protectors from Kabul and other strongholds. The Taliban's ability to resist now appears to be greatly diminished and U.S. strategy to be vindicated. But those "facts" could prove mere fancy next week. As we write, bin Laden's whereabouts remain unknown, or at least undisclosed. Reestablishing order and a functioning government in a post-Taliban Afghanistan, now divided up among rival ethnic warlords, poses daunting, if not insoluble problems. The Bush administration is apparently prosecuting this war with an estimable concern for avoiding civilian casualties and with a commitment to addressing the humanitarian crisis of the Afghan people. The U.S. has also voiced strong support for a UN presence to help build a new government. Doubtless there are things the American people do not yet know about this war, and the demand by some Bush advisers to widen the conflict is to be resisted absent convincing evidence that Iraq or other nations were involved in the September 11 attacks. But so far U.S. actions appear to be morally justified.

Among the more thoughtful commentators on the war has been the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. During their annual November meeting, the bishops released a statement titled "After September 11," in which they acknowledged "the right and duty of a nation and the international community to use military force if necessary to defend the common good by protecting the innocent against mass terrorism." Although far from an endorsement of specific U.S. policy, the bishops' statement supporting efforts to "hold accountable" those responsible for the terrorist attacks of September 11 was forthright. At the same time, in recognizing the tragic necessity of resorting to armed force, the bishops rightly emphasized the just-war criterion of noncombatant immunity and proportionality as well as the need to help create the conditions, both material and political, for a just peace.

The bishops' statement could have been stronger if it had spelled out for the skeptical how the U.S. response satisfied the just-war tradition's "last resort" criterion. "After September 11" was also weakened by a lengthy excursus on "pursuing justice and peace," calling for the resolution of a long list of ongoing crises from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the scandal of world poverty and the war in Sudan. No one would dispute the urgency of these problems. How the war in Afghanistan can effectively advance this agenda is less clear. The justice of holding accountable those responsible for the September 11 bombings does not depend on U.S. steps to correct the inequities of globalization, just as the need to alleviate poverty or protect human rights in the third world exists independently of the pursuit of bin Laden. The connection between injustice and terrorism is hardly self-evident, and the bishops offer no evidence demonstrating a direct link. Using the church's social agenda as a kind of background chorus to sell the just-war legitimacy of fighting terrorism risks confusion on both counts. It seems likely, for ex-

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ample, that the "root causes" of bin Laden's war against the U.S. lie in his radical religious ideology, not concern for the poor and disenfranchised.

It might have been helpful if the bishops had discussed Islam and the Arab world in more detail. Although the lack of "participation in political life" is alluded to, the role democratization can play in fighting poverty and curbing violent conflict, including religious conflict, is not sufficiently acknowledged in their statement. It is not easy to imagine the prospects for democracy in an Arab world characterized by great disparities in wealth and where corrupt monarchies or dictators spawn antidemocratic religious zealots. But democracy is clearly a necessary antidote to political violence. In this context, the bishops could have more explicitly endorsed freedom of expression and freedom of the press throughout the Islamic world. They also could have emphasized how the education and emancipation of women strengthen democratic forces and combat poverty.

The bishops go out of their way to defend the role of religion generally, calling for a "deeper understanding of and engagement with Islam." Such a sentiment is unobjectionable, but it nonetheless flirts with the Pollyannaish. While it is true that "terrorism in the name of religion profanes religion," it is also true that historically religion is no stranger to violence and, contrary to the bishops' assertions, is often a "source of conflict." It took Christianity centuries to wean itself of the sword, and it only did so reluctantly. The modern separation of church and state, after all, was the result of the inability of Christians to resolve their differences peacefully. A deeper understanding of Islam is necessary, but it is also possible, as Islamicist Bernard Lewis has suggested, that the current conflict between Islam and the West has religious rather than economic or political roots. That possibility is reflected in the tepid condemnations of the September 11 attacks by so many Muslim clerics. Islam knows little of the separation of mosque and state, and many Muslims believe that a permanent state of "war" exists with all "infidels." At least that is how Lewis and other scholars describe certain Islamic worldviews. The bishops are right to call for dialogue between Christians and Muslims, but dialogue may confront us with irreconcilable differences as much as unsuspected affinities.

November 27, 2001

OF SEVERAL MINDS

JOHN GARVEY

MAKING NICE WITH MUSLIMS

There are certain problems

Many months before September 11, I had a call from a Muslim who had seen my name in Peter Steinfels's *New York Times* "Beliefs" column. I had been quoted in the piece along with an imam, and the caller from Brooklyn thought we might be able to start some sort of Christian/Muslim dialogue. I invited him to visit me at church in Queens; he came with a couple of friends. All were African American, all were dressed in traditional Islamic dress. We had a pleasant conversation, agreed that most Americans know little or nothing about Islam, and they left me with a book, hoping I would find it enlightening. I said I would be in touch.

Let me pause here. There are people who say that the problem with the form of terrorism we face is not Islam. Islam is a religion of peace, distorted by the ugly use that bin Laden and company make of it, no more like real Islam than Jim Jones or David Koresh were like real Christianity.

No doubt the Islam of many Muslims—especially those who have lived in pluralistic democracies—is a religion of peace and tolerance. But it is disturbing to hear of young American Muslims who sincerely believe that Israel was behind the attack on the World Trade Center, or who repeat the rumors about pre-attack phone calls to Jews who worked there, telling them to stay home on the day of the attack.

And then there is the book I was given. Titled *Quranic Psychiatry* and published in Lahore (where the Brooklyn-based group's leader seems to be headquartered), it makes the interesting claim that no practicing Muslim has ever suffered from mental illness. This is merely silly, but the book contains some really disturbing passages: "Since scientists (most of whom were Jews) hated the church, in blind fury, they revolted against all its basic beliefs..."; "Among materialists, a few particular individuals have played havoc with man, his faith, and morality. They are Feuerbach, Freud, Darwin, Marx, and Lenin—all Jews who privately had different beliefs than what they 'scientifically' propagated..."; "Whatever Freud gave to the Western world was based on his own childhood experiences, perverted Jewish habits, and his use of cocaine and other drugs..."; "However, one is delighted to see a great change in many young psychiatrists who have turned their face away from Jewish fraud..."

Jews aren't the only villains. Here are the Christians: "Their [the "materialists'"] attitude is not very different from their predecessors, the priesthood which upheld the divinity of man, rather than of Allah. Both persecuted mankind on account of their blind faith in unscientific and irrational dogmas. The priests did it for fifteen centuries, murdering millions of innocent patients suffering from hysteria, seizures, and other mental maladies. According to the Gospels, the priests were supposed to heal patients in the name of Jesus, son of Mary. Ironically, these very 'viceroys' of Allah could not save their own converts from these very maladies which they claimed to heal." Also: "Christians should be-

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lieve and practice the Ten Commandments and give special attention to the injunction, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God, the Lord is One.' They should get rid of that piece of wood and reject the interpolations injected into the belief by Saul, the Zionist."

In addition to blaming the Jewish-controlled media and medicine for suppressing the successes of Islamic psychiatry, the book accuses the Wahhabis (the version of Islam favored by bin Laden and the Saudis) of having "nothing to do with the Holy Qur'an."

The fact that this sort of thing is apparently read and believed by some American Muslims is disturbing, but it doesn't mean that they are out to destroy anyone, any more than the anti-Catholicism of Jack Chick (the man who publishes weird little anti-everybody fundamentalist comic books) means that he wants to hurt Catholics, Orthodox, Jews, and the other unsaved people he ridicules. It does, however, go some way toward clearing the ground for violence, even when violence is not encouraged explicitly. Is this typically Muslim? In some places (Egypt), it is at the very least not untypical. The Egyptian media are full of anti-Semitic rot, and the Saudis have sanctioned the publication of the czarist forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

What does the Qur'an say? I have to say that I am incapable of reading the Qur'an (or rather a translation; because the Qur'an is the word of God it cannot be translated, according to Muslims, and still be really the Qur'an) from "inside," the way I can read the Bible. The Bible contains bloody passages and justification for murderous acts, but I know that this is not Judaism or Christianity. Similarly, many Muslims have been quick to say that nothing in the Qur'an can be used to justify the murder of innocent civilians. It is often said by Muslims that there is respect in traditional Islam for the People of the Book—that is, Jews and Christians. But it is easy to see how a fundamentalist could see some justification in the Qur'an for hatred, when reading lines like this, a reference to those who have befriended Jews, in chapter 58: "Do you see those who have befriended a people with whom Allah is angry? They belong neither to you nor to them...Allah has prepared for them a grievous scourge. Evil indeed is that which they have done." And here is a description of those People of the Book who have not embraced Islam, from chapter 98: "The unbelievers among the People of the Book and the pagans shall burn forever in the fire of Hell. They are the vilest of all creatures" (from *The Koran*, translated by N. J. Dawood, Penguin, 1968).

I called the Muslim who had visited me and told him that he could hardly expect understanding from people he regarded this way. On second thought, he may in fact be understood, all too well. I do not claim that these passages from the Qur'an, or the nonsense in the other book, are in any way representative of Islam as a whole. But no one can, or ever could, speak for Islam as a whole. And when a particularly violent form of Islam becomes a vehicle for the frustrations, hatreds, and grievances of millions of poor people—in societies which deny them economic justice, serious education, the opportunity for critical thought, and freedom of the press—the religious aspect of this war takes on a particularly ominous aspect, and it does, unfortunately, have a lot to do with Islam. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

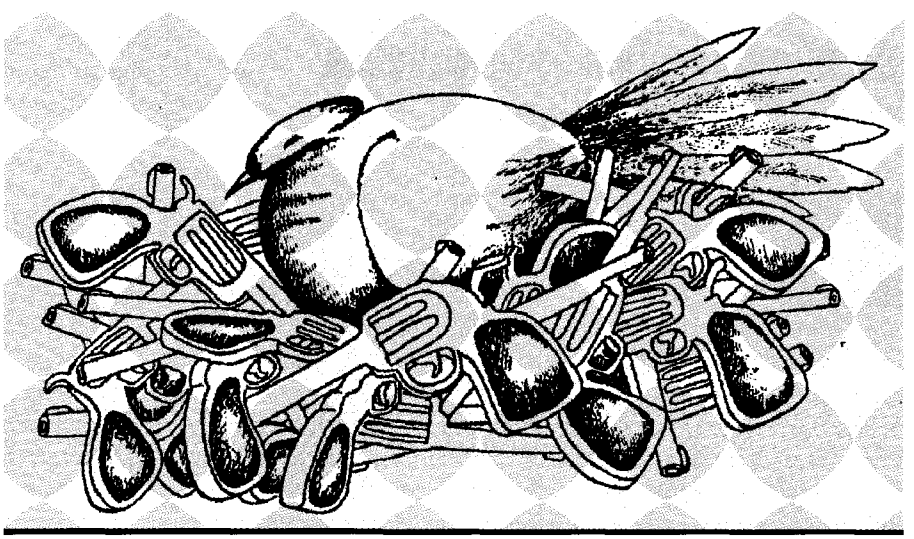
WILLIAM PFAFF

DANGERS OF VICTORY

Resisting the demand to widen the war

It is possible to be optimistic, if cautiously so, about the damaging consequences the Taliban's humiliating defeat will have for the reputation and influence of the Islamic fundamentalist movement elsewhere in the Muslim world. Osama bin Laden's followers succeeded in bringing down the World Trade Center in New York and attacking the Pentagon, but in Afghanistan, where it counts, the rout of the Taliban, their allies and protectors, was greeted with popular rejoicing. Not even the Taliban's Pashtun constituency would fight for them, or for him.

Looking to the future, the important question is what this victory will do to the United States, which, unlike Islamic fundamentalists of any stripe, has global power and conceives itself as possessing a global destiny. It is an important question because even before September 11, a serious American debate



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was under way between those who believe that the United States, at the peak of its power, should impose what they expect to become a Pax Americana, and other Americans who believe that such an undertaking would prove a rash and dangerous overreaching.

The latter are often attacked as liberals, afraid to use power, but actually are deeply conservative. There is a crucial difference between the American so-called neoconservatives, ascendant in this administration, and dictionary conservatives, disposed "to preserve what is established; opposed to change...adhering to sound principles." The latter by definition are skeptical about foreign policies intended to engineer vast changes in international society. They regard a radical program for overthrowing named regimes in the Islamic world, and installing American client governments, as an invitation to very large troubles.

The neoconservatives have a program for what they describe as "Phase Two" of the war against terrorism. Their national candidates for overthrow are the current governments of Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Libya, and Sudan. Some neoconservatives even imply that the U.S. government is disseminating "disinformation" when the FBI profiles the sender of the anthrax letters as more likely an American crank murderer rather than an Al Qaeda terrorist working under Iraq's influence. They say this steers U.S. public opinion away from new attacks on guilty Muslim states.

The Bush administration actually has been remarkably restrained, given the pressure it is under from such individuals within its own ranks, as well as from what must be called the War Party in the press and Congress. In part this follows from the lack of realism in such recommendations. Secondary administration figures, such as Douglas J. Feith, the undersecretary of defense for policy, recommend that the United States fight terrorism "at the wholesale level," "compelling" those who don't voluntarily comply with American demands concerning terrorist complicities. More sensible figures ask what actually would come from politico-military interventions in still other Muslim countries.

The problems of succession for such regimes are insoluble by foreigners, as Afghanistan at the present moment vividly demonstrates (and as George Bush's father grasped at the time of the Gulf War). The warlords who before the Taliban took power had given Afghanistan twenty years of death and chaos are now telling the UN, foreign troops, foreign journalists, and the international aid agencies to get out of their country: They are unwanted.

If the warlords have their way, it is quite possible that the Taliban will soon be back. The last condition of that country could yet prove worse than its first. And all we need is Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Somalia, Libya, and Sudan in similar condition. America's success in Afghanistan feeds the ambition to escalate, nourishing the illusion that there is a final defeat to be inflicted on evil, with a happy ever-after. Rather, de-escalation is what is needed.

It is needed for another realistic reason: to preserve the domestic health of American society. The war against evil has, since September 11, given the United States an effective elimination of habeas corpus for foreigners illegally in the country. It seems about to give it military courts of exception, by which the United States unilaterally assumes a right to seize any non-U.S. person anywhere, try him or her before U.S. military judges, and, if so judged, execute the prisoner.

Notwithstanding this, there is not going to be a Pax Americana. The reason is that the American people are not imperialists, do not imagine themselves imperialists, and lack the ruthlessness to impose and maintain an empire. If they don't themselves realize that now, or their representatives in Washington fail to do so, they will all, as in Vietnam, discover the truth the hard way. □

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Anne-Marie Slaughter

TERRORISTS ON TRIAL

Getting it right

In his first speech to the American people after September 11, President George W. Bush said "we will bring the terrorists to justice or justice to the terrorists." In mid-November, the administration clarified what it meant by bringing justice to the terrorists—trial by military tribunal. Under rules drafted by the Pentagon, such tribunals are not subject to constitutional safeguards; they are without the normal burden of proof required in U.S. criminal trials; and they allow the possibility of presenting evidence in secret as well as admitting evidence that would not be admissible in U.S. trials. Judgment would be by two-thirds of the military judges appointed, without possibility of review by any civilian court. Convicted defendants would be subject to the death penalty.

Many individuals and institutions have already condemned this plan, ranging from the *New York Times* editorial board to conservative columnist William Safire. Most of these condemnations focus on the violations of civil liberties that Americans not only take for granted but also consider part of their birthright and their very identity as a people. These criticisms are well-placed and justified. Other objections concern the long-term impact on our ability to fight and win the war against terrorism. Convicting alleged terrorists in secret trials without the process due Americans, even American terrorists like Timothy McVeigh, will hand Al Qaeda an enormous propaganda victory and make it much more difficult to win hearts and minds across the Islamic world. Further, trial in military tribunals dignifies defendants as soldiers in an Islamic army, rather than treating them as the global criminals they are.

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"Mr. Foreman, has the jury come to a verdict?"

We are essentially fighting a particularly frightening and deadly form of global organized crime. Fighting organized crime at home poses many of the same difficulties: the tension between securing convictions and jeopardizing informants, security risks, the difficulty of actually getting sufficient evidence to convict. But we have developed laws and procedures that make it possible to hunt down and prosecute master criminals in global criminal networks of drug-runners, traffickers in women, illicit arms sales, and other dangerous activity. We can fight global terrorist networks the same way.

But isn't this a war? Yes, in the sense that the threat posed by terrorist networks is sufficiently lethal to justify, at least under present circumstances, the limited use of armed force to pursue them and to punish and deter the states that actively sponsor them. But unlike all previous wars, we are using force in pursuit of individuals whom we can only identify as the enemy once we have subjected them to the mechanisms of the criminal justice system—once we have demonstrated that they have engaged in the planning, preparation, or execution of either specific acts of terrorism or a general campaign of terrorism. We have no quarrel with ordinary Afghans or Saudis or Egyptians.

That means that we have to get it right. If the suspects tried, convicted, and sentenced before military tribunals are in fact terrorists, we will have significantly reduced a threat to our national security. If they are not, if they are wrongly convicted due to cases of mistaken identity, or an inability to challenge key evidence, or the difficulty of refuting circumstantial evidence that would normally not be admissible in U.S. courts, or simply through the over zealousness of two out of three military-tribunal judges not subject to ordinary appellate review, we will have sown dragon's teeth. We will be, and will be seen to be, fighting and killing innocent Muslims.

The point of the guarantees embedded in the Constitution is precisely to prevent the conviction of innocent people, the ultimate abuse of state power. Those guarantees will protect any U.S. citizens suspected of aiding and abetting terrorism. The guarantees of the German and the Spanish constitutions will protect the suspected terrorists found and tried in those countries (and Spain has said it will not extradite accused terrorists to the United States if they are going to be judged by military tribunals). But in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and even here in the United States in trials of noncitizens, we are proposing to depart fundamentally from those safeguards.

We are fighting and must win a new kind of war. We will ultimately have to craft new rules to govern this type of conflict, both domestically and internationally. But the best way to develop such rules is to work together with our allies and nations across the world that are similarly threatened. We should draw on the experience of nations with long histories of fighting terrorism—Britain, Spain, India, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Colombia, the Philippines. We should devise a system that draws on both national courts and an international tribunal. Setting ourselves up unilaterally as judge, jury, and executioner in closed military tribunals is a recipe for defeat. □

Anne-Marie Slaughter *is J. Sinclair Armstrong Professor of Law at Harvard Law School and president-elect of the American Society of International Law.*

Andrew Gleeson

LOVE, SEX & AIDS

Report from South Africa

In August, the Pretoria High Court ruled that antiprostitution provisions in the Sexual Offenses Act were unconstitutional. If the Constitutional Court confirms that decision, the door to legalized prostitution in South Africa will open a little wider. "Sex industry" representatives and a sympathetic media welcomed the decision. The current-affairs television program "Carte Blanche" treated viewers to a tour of an upmarket brothel and an interview with two articulate white women who affected perfect contentment with their profession. They might have been lawyers or parliamentarians, had they not been naked and sipping champagne in a spa.

By contrast, the statement on HIV/AIDS released the same month by the Catholic bishops of Southern Africa was greeted with media hooting. The punchy *Daily Mail & Guardian* compared the bishops' opposition to condoms with the church's condemnation of Galileo. Though the sentiment was foolish, the image was perfect as anticlerical propaganda: The bishops were living in the Dark Ages.

What the bishops said was not beyond criticism. They get

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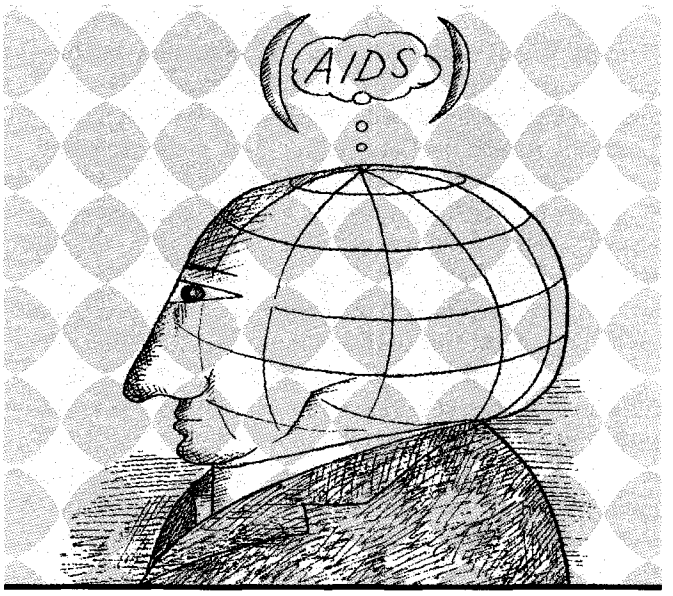

into a mess trying to accommodate the ideal of sexual love that makes condoms questionable with the need to dam the flood of death. The bishops conceded condom use to be a matter of conscience for married couples where one is infected, but denied this liberty to the unmarried: an inept compromise that seemed close to endorsing what they sincerely denied—AIDS as punishment for sin.

Still, it is disproportionate to stress this point without reporting the episcopal statement's positive message: that AIDS is spread by promiscuity and our best defense is the chastity and fidelity which express the profound connection between sex and love. The *Daily Mail & Guardian* called this fantasy. But it is far less fantastic than expecting a permanent defeat of sexual disease from a merely technical campaign of medical prophylaxis and treatment. And with AIDS now the leading cause of death in South Africa, it is certainly less injurious to the dignity and beauty of humanity. We are not machines for intercourse and reproduction. The sexual act has a meaning, as real as the meaning of a smile, a frown, or a glare, and every bit as dependent on the mystery of our embodiment. That meaning is love. We are fragile mortals whose sense of one another as fellow human beings depends on recognizing a bond of kindness, patience, and tenderness, a bond most perfectly visible in intimate physical union.

This reality is not contradicted by rape, pornography, or prostitution. These derive their terrible meanings from their perversion of sexual love, when one human being deliberately denies to another what is most deeply wanted: recognition as a fellow human being. Sexuality has sometimes been spoken of most deeply by those who have suffered most from its deformation. Some prostitutes have articulated its meaning in ways that would put many a churchman's banal waffling or self-righteous priggishness to shame.

They were not, however, the women on "Carte Blanche," whose job was to titillate while remaining the girls next door. The program strained to show that there is nothing about prostitution that cannot be fixed by judicious regulation: Every working girl can be a Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*. Similarly, the prevailing wisdom holds there is nothing to concern us in sexual promiscuity that cannot be corrected by skilled condom use. That the show's producers could so glamorize prostitution in a country with an HIV rate of more than one in ten is staggering.

The "condomania" of anti-AIDS policy in South Africa and most Western nations is another expression of the view of human sexuality as a biological urge needing release. At an extreme, this view of human beings can reach the point where some no longer care enough about themselves or others to use condoms at all. A public policy on AIDS based almost exclusively on condom use and other medical strategies, and refusing to address questions of the meaning of sex, threatens to saw off the branch it is sitting on. We can only care enough about others to use condoms at all if we first see in them the soul which requires that their and our own bodies be respected.

One need not agree with the bishops' stance on condoms to see the weaknesses of the present South African policy. Any such policy is likely to fail if not nourished by a deeper sense of the weightiness of human sexuality. How that weightiness is expressed in public policy is a matter for judgment about political, cultural, and medical feasibility. Nothing I have said means that condoms have no role in public-health policy (or that prostitution may not be best regulated under a legalized regime). The so-called "ABC" policy to slow the spread of HIV/AIDS—abstinence, and failing that, "being faithful," and failing that, condoms—has had some success in Uganda.

But this too may fail if the recommendation for self-restraint in the slogan degenerates into censorious moralizing. Moralizing is one side of the coin; its other side is libertarian orthodoxy. Libertarianism denies that human sexuality has weight; it tries to make of sex something trivial. Moralizing recognizes that sex is weighty, but attaches the wrong kind of weight by tainting it as something dirty: hence its prudish discomfort. So while the media have drenched society in an endless, sleazy trivialization of sex, a worse reaction would be to recoil into indiscriminate sex censorship. The pornographer and the puritan both read *Lady Chatterley's Lover* through similar lenses: they see the physical sex but not the love of the world that Lawrence tried to show was the meaning of sex. The pornographer and the puritan, Lawrence thought, had killed all their true emotional response to sex and substituted an inward-looking preoccupation with copulatory sensation. "Sex is the one thing you cannot really swindle," he wrote, meaning that the falsification of our emotional lives that distorts attitudes toward sex must eventually take its toll, resulting in self-hatred and misanthropy. Deny it as we may, it remains true that when we touch another human being, it resonates in eternity. □

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Robert A. Senser

NOBEL SENTIMENTS

Joseph Stiglitz & the Washington Consensus

At gala ceremonies in Stockholm on December 10, Joseph E. Stiglitz, fifty-eight, professor of economics at Columbia, will receive the highest honor of his profession—the Nobel Prize in Economics awarded by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. Stiglitz shares the prize with two other American economists, George A. Akerlof of the University of California at Berkeley and A. Michael Spence of Stanford, for contributions they made back in the 1970s. The Nobel Committee chose them for having "laid the foundation for a general theory of markets with asymmetric information," meaning the unbalanced condition in which "actors on one side of the market have much better information than those on the other." In short, the Nobel Prize-winners have raised significant questions about the prevailing lassez-faire consensus.

Of the three economists, as the *Los Angeles Times* noted (October 11), "Stiglitz has gone the furthest in pushing the issue in policy circles and producing controversy in the process." More significantly, Stiglitz's recent work, which went unremarked in his Nobel award, has gone very far in laying the foundation for a new dimension of economics incorporating asymmetries not just of information but of wealth and power.

Hours after getting the Nobel news on October 10, Stiglitz spoke to reporters about his expansive approach to economics. "I believe very strongly that economics can make a very large difference...for the better in the world," he said. His recent focus, he pointed out, has been on "the disparity between the haves and the have-nots," particularly on the plight of the world's poorest people. He made clear his intention to pursue those concerns vigorously. "Much of our global economic system is characterized by a lot of inequities," he said. "The global trading regime is one which has been devised mostly by the [industrialized] North for the benefit of the North. It seems to me that one of the very important elements in the agenda going forward has to be to try to redress those inequities."

Perhaps Stiglitz's most comprehensive exposition of his approach is an address he gave on "Democratic Development as the Fruits of Labor" during the January 2000 meeting of the American Economic Association in Boston. Just ending a three-year stint as chief economist at the World Bank, where he frequently challenged policies of the bank and its sister institution, the International Monetary Fund, Stiglitz reflected on how he often felt like a lone voice arguing for positions differing from those springing from neoclassical economics, particularly on policies affecting workers.

"If one didn't know better," he said in his swan song, "it might seem as if the fundamental propositions of neoclassical economics were designed to undermine the rights and positions of workers." He then went on to illustrate how several economic propositions do just that. Heading his list was this one: that labor is just another factor of production, like land and machinery, in the belief that "there is nothing special about labor." Stiglitz offered a rebuttal in economic terms: "Labor is not like other factors. Workers have to be motivated to perform. While under some circumstances it may be difficult to coach a machine to behave in the way desired (for example, trying to get a computer not to crash), what is entailed in eliciting the desired behavior out of a person and out of a machine are, I would argue, fundamentally different."

Using such flawed neoclassical propositions, however, policymakers sent developing countries "a standard message to increase 'labor market flexibility,'" Stiglitz said. "The not-so-subtle subtext...was to lower wages and lay off unneeded workers." As a result, "even when labor market problems are not the core of the problem facing a country, all too often workers are asked to bear the brunt of the costs of adjustment."

Stiglitz, born in Gary, Indiana, and a graduate of Amherst, got his Ph.D. from MIT, became a tenured professor at Yale at the age of twenty-seven, and went on to professorships at Princeton, Oxford, Stanford, and now Columbia. His experience outside academia, first as a member of President Bill Clinton's Council of Economic Advisors and later at the World Bank, sharpened his insights into the asymmetries of wealth and power, particularly as implemented internationally under what the pros call the Washington Consensus.

The Washington Consensus is a free-trade and free-investment strategy for international growth first defined and labeled by economist John Williamson in 1990. It contained no equity issues, because, as Williamson explained later, he found Washington policymakers "essentially contemptuous of equity concerns." Stiglitz was not among the contemptuous, and is not. He argues that the Washington Consensus is too narrow, economically and also morally skewed in favor of the rich. His harshest criticism targets policies imposing and protecting the unrestricted cross-border flow of capital and then, when the fleeing "hot money" creates a broader financial crisis, providing generous financial bailouts.

"In East Asia [especially during the early 1990s]," Stiglitz says, "it was reckless lending by international banks and other financial institutions, combined with reckless borrowing by domestic financial institutions—combined with fickle investors—that may have precipitated the crisis. But the costs, in terms of soaring unemployment and plummeting wages, were borne by workers. Workers were asked to listen to sermons about austerity and 'bearing pain' just a short while after hearing, from the same preachers, sermons about how globalization and opening up capital markets would bring them unprecedented growth."

More and more analysts see eye to eye with Stiglitz on the

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The Moment

Across the field
at a pond obscured by Black Willows

I turned a certain way
and saw a Great Blue Heron

beside a white limb
in the water.

Naked.
Uncertain.

Like the soul in its first moment
without the body,

lingering
over all it remembered

until I startled it
into heavy wings, beating

across the gray sky,
the place it left behind

emptied,
turned to something less.

Paul Martin

perils of unrestricted international capital markets. The most vocal economist among them, Jagdish Bhagwati, also a professor of economics at Columbia, identifies Wall Street by name as a guilty party and beneficiary. Even the *Economist*, in its September 28 survey of globalization, concedes that one of the clearest lessons of the past few years is that "foreign capital is a mixed blessing," especially in the case of short-term lending and borrowing by banks, which "are systematically protected from the consequences of their reckless behavior." But unlike the *Economist*, Stiglitz presses the question of responsibility for such policies.

"Finance ministers and central bank governors have the seats at the table [of intergovernmental financial institutions]," he said in a June 2000 interview with *The Progressive* magazine. "Finance ministers and central bank governors are linked to financial communities in their countries, so they push policies that reflect the viewpoints and interests of the financial community and barely hear the voices of those who are the first victims of dictated policies."

Stiglitz singles out the U.S. Treasury Department for blame, since it shapes the U.S. position on international economic policy, which then often becomes the policy of the IMF and other intergovernmental financial institutions. At a conference convened by the AFL-CIO and the Washington College of Law last February, he said: "We would never be content to delegate domestic economic policy to the Treasury. In today's world, it is equally misguided to delegate international economic policy to the Treasury, or even to the Treasury and State. A broader range of voices, including those of labor, must be heard." That has yet to occur.

More than most economists, Stiglitz grasps that giving nongovernmental groups a voice in global economic decisions can help identify problems and find workable solutions. Organized business is often accepted in this role; organized labor is not. At a high-level meeting held in October in Shanghai, for example, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum, an international organization of government and private leaders from the United States and twenty other Pacific Rim countries, allowed participation by business but not by labor. Stiglitz believes that although business belongs at such meetings, it should not monopolize the private-sector role.

Unlike some critics on the left and right who favor closing down the IMF and similar institutions, Stiglitz sticks to advocating reform. Indeed, top officials of the U.S. Treasury also seemed to be in a serious reform mode three years ago, when a financial crisis was sweeping much of the world. Robert E. Rubin, then Treasury secretary, even suggested that strengthening the "architecture" of the international financial system should include implementing core labor standards throughout the world. But when the financial crisis faded, so did almost all interest by policymakers in reform.

Stiglitz holds that there is no single "best" strategy for development, that different policies impose different costs and confer different benefits on different groups, and that the choices of alternatives should be made through a democratic process. As a replacement for the Washington Consensus, he offers what he calls a new Democratic Consensus, built around "democratic, equitable, and sustainable development." Among its components, he said in his Boston address, are these three principles: (1) the rights of workers should be "a central focus" of development policy; (2) "labor unions and other genuine forms of popular self-organization are key to democratic economic development"; and (3) worker representatives should be heard at every level, from the workplace all the way up to the international level.

Are those ideas radical ones for a mainline economist? Not really, according to Daniel Rodrik, professor of economics at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. "What is striking about Joe's views," Rodrik says, "is not that much their substance (similar and often more 'radical' views are expressed, using appropriate economics jargon, in academic seminars and conferences) but that they were offered by such a prominent neoclassical economist in a quasi-public forum. Economists tend to close rank, and defend the orthodoxy in their public comments, even when their own research runs counter to them." □

Robert A. Senser, *a former labor attaché in the U.S. Foreign Service, edits* Human Rights for Workers *(www.senser.com).*

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POLITICS AFTER SEPTEMBER 11

Domestic & foreign affairs at odds

Wilson Carey McWilliams

Before September 11, the Bush administration was in the doldrums and sliding a bit in the polls. Its chief achievement—Bush's massive tax cut—was a policy the public didn't much like, and one based on forecasts seen even then as so falsely optimistic as to require major amendment or repeal. Its greatest asset was Bush's version of charm and a disposition to avoid giving offense, as in the president's politically adroit handling of the stem-cell dilemma, which left both sides irked but not infuriated. In fact, the president demonstrated an almost Clintonesque talent for the tactical retreat, moderating his early opposition to energy price controls in California, for example, and relegating school vouchers to the political land of the living dead. Bush's tendency to defer to his party's right-wing leaders in Congress had cost Republicans control of the Senate, but if the economy looked increasingly grim, it was too early for Bush to be assigned much of the blame. Domestically, the big story was Gary Condit. In foreign affairs, the administration looked relatively sure-handed, and while most Americans were skeptical about the president's plans for an antimissile system, not many noticed, on September 9, when Senator Joe Biden (D-Del.) argued on national television that terrorism was a greater potential enemy. Approaching nine months in office, the administration probably rated a C—not much wrong, not much right—and the president wasn't greatly missed when he headed off for the ranch.

After September 11, of course, the president's job approval ratings went through the roof, and Republican candidates hoped to shelter under his wing. What they discovered, of course, was that the president's ratings were largely confined to foreign affairs, where patriotism seems to command us to rally behind the commander-in-chief. (Even in foreign policy, Bush's ratings are strikingly vulnerable to disappointment: In Vietnam, Lyndon Johnson could draw on confidence based on what government had done in the past, but that capital has largely been expended; Bush relies on hope for what government may do, a fragile commitment, as speculative and unstable as the tech-stock boom.)

In postcatastrophe domestic politics the administration continues to follow its ideological stars—a faith in the magic of the market and a distrust of government—in a way that suggests conviction, but also a failure to adapt to the new temper of the times. The president's "economic stimulus" package (the promise of help in reconstruction aside) consists largely of yet more tax cuts, skewed to benefit corporations and the well-to-do. It is not apt to make much difference in economic life, except in the very long term. And the president initially chose to throw himself into the fight in the House to keep airline security in private hands. The "lapses" and lies of those security companies indicate that on the margin, profit will always trump safety, which is why we do not privatize the uniformed services. The majority of Americans recognize this clearly enough, and in the Senate, even conservatives got out of the way, voting 100-0 to make airport security a public responsibility. Subsequently, the House Republicans capitulated and Bush signed the bill turning the supervision of airline security over to the federal government. But the Republicans will pay a price for their ideological stance. Take your pick: the president first stood on principle or he gave in to the right-wingers who lead the House. In either case, as Marge Roukema (R-N.J.) predicted, the Democrats "will beat us up," and she is almost certainly right.

The Bush administration, following family precedent, doesn't get it in domestic life. After the attacks, the public mood is more concerned with security and less concerned with cost. That Americans worry about terrorism, after all, only makes them more worried about the jobs and schools and small decencies that terrorism threatens. Bush's very popularity derives from the perception of the president, in foreign affairs, as a forceful champion, determined to pay the price of safety, and the GOP's domestic paladin, Rudy Giuliani, is notable for his aggressive, even eager, use of government power for whatever he takes to be the common good. It's not clear how long our patriotic enthusiasm will last, but it evidently reflects a greater sense of community, a recognition of how much we depend on one another.

Along with that stirring goes a new appreciation of government, no less baffling and overwhelming, but clearly necessary and, in a crucial sense, ours. We have been reminded, forcefully, of the day-to-day heroism of firefighters and police, EMTs and paramedics and postal workers, in a way that burnishes the nobility of public service. (There are signs, too, of a longer-term and broader reevaluation of public careers: television features successful shows celebrating teachers—"Boston Public"—and social workers—"Judging Amy.") And no one, despite the problems of the Centers for Disease

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Control, wants the anthrax crisis handled by one's HMO. Sixty-four percent of Americans say they trust government to do what's right most of the time, the polls tell us—about twice as many as last spring and the highest figure since 1966, in the early days of Vietnam.

Of course, the public mood had its eddies. Given the economic pinch, taxes—and especially, property taxes—are even less popular than usual. Still, in Virginia, Democrat Mark Warner, a self-styled "Virginia conservative," held out against a no-new-tax pledge and was elected governor anyway on November 6. In New Jersey, on the other hand, Jim McGreevey—having resisted such a pledge for much of the campaign, mindful of the state's looming deficit—eventually gave ground, announcing that he had "ruled out" any tax increase.

For McGreevey, it amounted to a failure of nerve, even for a candidate who prefers playing it safe and building coalitions. He was always a sure winner: His opponent, Bret Schundler, was far too conservative for New Jersey, pointedly shunned by many of the state's moderate Republicans, including the acting governor, Donald DeFrancesco (Mark Warner also benefited from a divided GOP in Virginia). But New Jersey Democrats, with their shuddering memories of the decade-long setback that followed Governor Jim Florio's tax increase in 1990, wanted a McGreevey margin big enough to pull in a Democratic legislature, and that they got, winning control in the Assembly and a tie in the State Senate.

Yet despite that familiar pact with the devil, McGreevey ran as an unapologetic advocate for public schools against his opponent's version of vouchers, and his advertisements trumpeted the endorsement of McGreevey's candidacy by police and firefighters. Schundler seemed a strong leader to a good many voters, and he tried hard to identify himself with Bush and Giuliani, but his program suggested he would devote his strength to the dismantling of government, and it was surely the wrong year for Schundler's willingness, in theory, to sign a law permitting concealed weapons. In his soft way, McGreevey ran as the champion of government devoted to the "working- and middle-class" New Jerseyans for whom public services rank as personal necessities, especially in the aftermath of September 11.

The Republican victory in the New York mayoralty spoke in the same accents. That Mike Bloomberg won was due in part to his personal fortune, and in part to luck (the Democrats were caught in a delayed, divisive primary and eventually nominated a candidate, Mark Green, with a reputation for arrogance and a very long list of enemies). Yet at least as much, Bloomberg's triumph turned on his association with Giuliani and his presumed ability to manage the economy. The nominal Republican, Bloomberg, seemed to promise stronger leadership for stronger government, and for much of embattled America—that was the winning message this year.

Yet neither the candidates nor the president seems to understand in more than a fragmentary way that the American wave of patriotism is also a desire to share in public service, to make one's appropriate contribution to the republic. President Bush, more Harding than Pericles, asked us only to "get on with your lives, hug your kids, and go to the mall," reflecting an image of the citizen as consumer, and his recent half-baked call for community service volunteers isn't much better. Across the centuries, Aristotle offers better insight into the American soul. A democracy, he taught, is in important ways like an army, because the democratic idea of justice—that a free life, freely given, is the greatest contribution to public life—is most persuasive in war. And in any case, democracy cherishes the ability of all to share, as equally as may be, in the burdens of rule as well as the rights of subjects. What Americans have sensed, in this moment of crisis, is the possibility that they may matter. The fact that the Bush administration isn't asking us for more, I suspect, is that they are uneasy with this teaching: at bottom, the leading figures around the president are oligarchs, people who believe or suspect that unequal wealth, not equal life, is the defining principle of justice (as in the argument that the rich deserve larger tax cuts because they pay more taxes).

By contrast, John McCain (R-Ariz.) has been arguing (in association with Senator Evan Bayh [D-Ind.]) that the current crisis is the right occasion to institute National Service, a policy which would allow Americans to make an honorable down payment on the debt they owe their country. We should hope that such voices get a hearing. The memories and monuments of America's tragedy offer possibilities, not to be missed, for the revitalization of democracy. □

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SCREEN

Rand Richards Cooper

ARCHITECTURAL ANGST

'Berlin Babylon'

Two years ago, while renovation of Berlin's former Reichstag building was still underway, I asked a German diplomat why his government would entrust a British architect (Sir Norman Foster) with the redesign of its most significant national edifice. "That's what we do in Berlin now," he said, dryly. "We let foreign architects do the important buildings, so if a building ends up exuding a sense of power, we won't catch flak for it."

The diplomat's remarks reveal the acute awareness of image that Germans took on after World War II—a hypersensitivity to world opinion that is as unlike brash American insouciance as, well, defeat is to victory. With reunification and the move of government back to Berlin from provincial, unthreatening Bonn, Germans have been anxious to quell worries about a newly exuberant nationalism. The capital's return was celebrated in 1995 with the spectacle of the still-unfinished Reichstag being wrapped in a gargantuan sheet by the artist Christo, like a mammoth birthday present—an action that symbolically unveiled the new republic even as it inoculated, through its own colossal irreverence, against the age-old German virus of national glory.

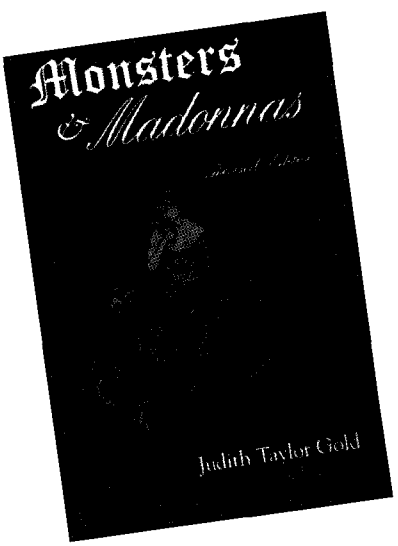
"German history, it concerns us all," sighs an architect in *Berlin Babylon*, Hubertus Siegert's documentary film of the decade-long rebuilding of Berlin. Indeed. Seat not only of the Kaiser's Reich, but of Hitler's and the Communists' too, Berlin grapples ceaselessly with its past. The city contains some of the most somber and challenging commemorative art you'll see anywhere, like the memorial to the Nazi book burnings in Bebelplatz, a white room lined with empty shelves buried beneath the square, which you peer into through a plexiglass window underfoot; or the Bernauerstrasse monument to "The Victims of Communist Tyranny," where a high steel wall preserves a section of the Todesstreife, the Death Strip that divided East and West Berlin. This is public art that seeks what Germans call an *Auseinandersetzung* with history: a coming-to-terms; an encounter.

Picturing an absence

As with art, so with architecture. Nowhere is as much attention paid to the hermeneutics of architecture as in Berlin—to the messages buildings send and the historical and ideological links they command. When Christo's wrappers came off the Reichstag—now the new federal Bundestag—there remained the question of whether to restore the building's original dome, destroyed in WWII. Many considered that too bombastic, an echo of the monstrous, domed Great Hall that Hitler and his architect, Albert Speer, once hoped to build. And what about the traditional Prussian eagle behind the speaker's podium in the legislative chamber in Bonn—in the context of Berlin, was it perhaps too aggressive looking, too predatory, too... Prussian? Should it be redesigned? *New Yorker* writer Jane Kramer has written of Berlin's "architectural anguish," its struggle with the aesthetics of German power; the city ties itself in knots, Kramer observed, "looking for Hitler in the de-

(Continued on page 18)

WAS JESUS THE BRIDEGROOM OF HIS MOTHER?



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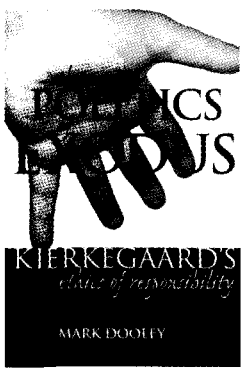

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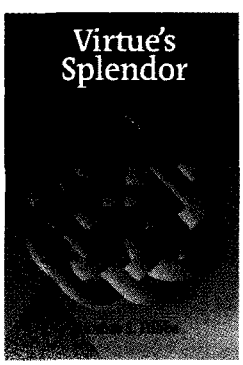

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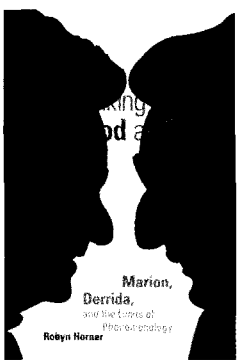

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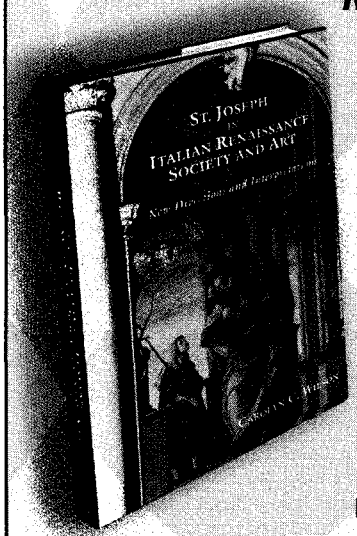

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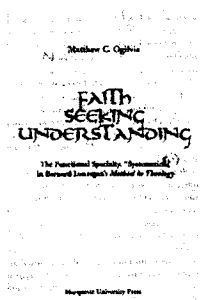

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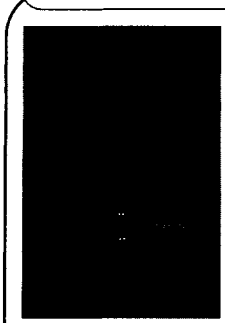

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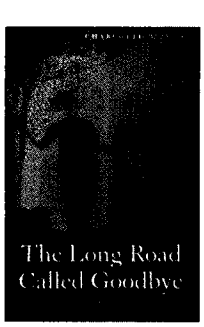

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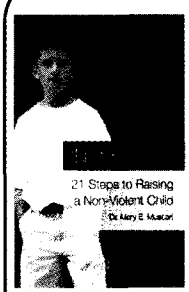

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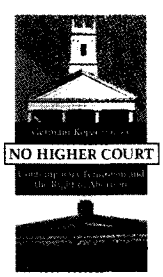

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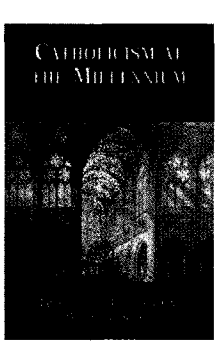

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(Continued from page 15)

tails." Imagine Americans agonizing over whether building a porch with white columns celebrates slavery, and you get an idea of how tormented Berlin is by architecture. So when the Wall came down, leaving a huge empty space smack in the center of a major city, an already unique situation took on extra significance. In what image would the New Berlin be recreated?

Siegert's *Berlin Babylon* lists architects in the opening credits like movie stars—Renzo Piano, Helmut Jahn, Rem Koolhaas, and others who were the major players in the city's remaking. To a clanging symphony of construction equipment, director Siegert and his photographers, Ralf Dobrick and Thomas Plenert, swing us along on a Steadicam tour of Berlin, its dingy old apartments and gleaming new office complexes. Wide-angle panoramas, aerial surveys, and time-lapse shots of construction capture the immensity of Bauplatz Berlin, from the crane-cluttered Lehrter Banhof, soon to be Europe's biggest train station, all the way to Potsdamer Platz. Once a busy commercial center—Europe's first stoplight was here—Potsdamer Platz was obliterated in WW II, then split in two by the Wall. After reunification, Sony, Daimler Benz, and other corporate giants bought up the real estate and created a hi-rise corporate, retail, and leisure fantasyland that has been condemned by many as a drastic capitulation to American urban style and values. Director Siegert joins this chorus of boos—we see Helmut Jahn at a ludicrous dedication ceremony for his mammoth Sony Center, with dancers lowering a huge wreath—and adds several more for Helmut Kohl and his commissioning of Axel Schultes' grandiose Chancellory on the Spree River.

Siegert refrains from narration, preferring to record Berlin's army of architects, developers, master planners, engineers, real estate moguls, and construction workers in their daily work talk. This method will frustrate those not well acquainted with the city's particular building controversies. For instance, we get a glimpse of the much-maligned East German Palast der Republik, now boarded up and riddled with graffiti; but Siegert doesn't fill in the fascinating battle over the fate of this particular building, the factions that have formed on every conceivable side: from those who want to tear down the eyesore and build a luxury hotel, to those who want to restore the eyesore as a testament to the horrors of Socialist aesthetics. Such are the contorted politics of Berlin architecture, when renovation can seem indistinguishable from revenge.

Partway through *Berlin Babylon*, Siegert gives us a five-second look—again, without comment—at the gleaming neo-Expressionist building that is arguably the most important of all Berlin's new architecture: the Jewish Museum, by Daniel Libeskind. A zig-zag structure said to represent a shattered star of David, with slit windows cut like wounds in its zinc skin, the Jewish Museum poses an intentionally shocking contrast to the neo-classical Berlin Museum next door—through which visitors actually enter, down a tunnel burrowing ominously from within the older building. Inside Libeskind's museum, asymmetrical corridors induce a surreal and claustrophobic sense of nightmare. One hallway gets smaller as you go, until finally you stand trapped and hunched; a Garden of Exile contains olive trees hidden in huge concrete planters with only the treetops visible, unreachably far overhead. Four hundred thousand people visited Libeskind's building before a single exhibit was installed—guides leading groups of Germans through the maze of tunnels and inquiring, What are you feeling now? ("Lost," a man said on the tour I took. "I don't know where to go or how to get out.") Yet another *Auseinandersetzung* with history.

A harrowingly metaphorical building, the Jewish Museum exemplifies the preoccupation with symbolism in Berlin's new architecture. To solve the Reichstag dome dilemma, Norman Foster ended up designing a mammoth cupola of clear glass—a structural trope for political transparency. Rooftop tour guides at the building toss off interpretive riffs on the theme of sunshine government. "Over there is the Eye of the Chancellor," they explain, pointing to a huge semicircular window in the nearby Chancellery. "Gerhard Schröder can look out and watch the Bundestag." So, too, can citizens, peering down into the legislative chamber below. Everyone is watching everyone. It is a striking feature of the capital's *Weltanschauung*, this earnest faith in the capacity of architecture not merely to symbolize, but somehow to guarantee, good politics.

The Bundestag dome, fitted out with concentric spiral staircases, has quickly become the city's biggest tourist attraction, and the never-ending stream of solitary, circling climbers, seen from a passing bus or boat, is a memorable and highly suggestive image of New Berlin. But what exactly does it suggest? With those double staircases ingeniously engineered to keep traffic flowing up one and down the other, is the real message that there's only one possible direction to go in? Or that once you're started, there's no turning back? And what about the distinct vibration one feels underfoot, a shakiness at the legislative center? Berlin does this to you—or rather, to itself: Its metaphors take ominous and unwonted turns; those tourists "trudging endlessly along the ramp," writes architecture critic Martin Filler in a recent *New York Review of Books* essay, "look like inmates in a nineteenth-century workhouse."

Berlin Babylon closes with a view of a large and empty lot halfway between the Bundestag and Potsdamer Platz. I'd seen this same lot several times during the film, and wondered why, until at last I recognized it as the site of the still-unbuilt Holocaust memorial, which has prompted the mother of all agonized Berlin design battles. Here Siegert's silence is eloquent, as if to acknowledge, amid the profusion of new buildings, of material and metaphor, the void at the center of it all. Berlin is a loud city by German standards, but one haunted by the unspeakable; and more than any particular dazzling new building, it is "the erasure and void of Berlin's Jewish life," to use Daniel Libeskind's words, that establishes it as the ultimate postmodern city—the new Berlin, a city rebuilt around an absence. □

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Richard Alleva

A&E GETS A FACE-LIFT

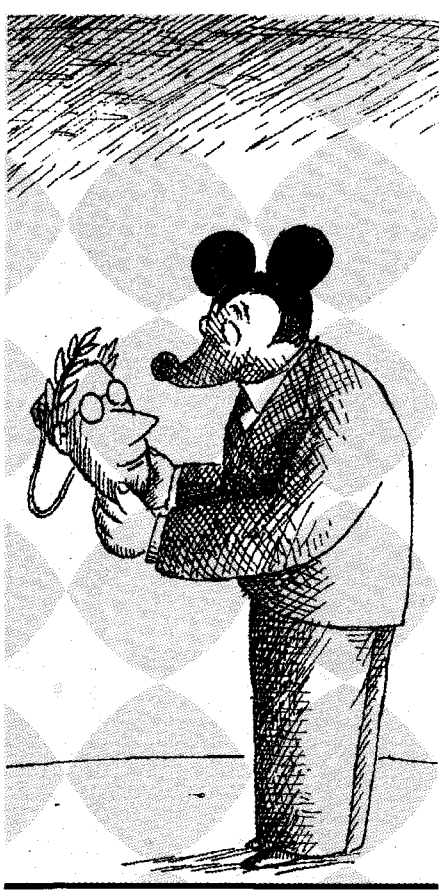
Stark reality slicked up

TV programming needs a face. I don't mean merely the face of the host or star of a particular series, but the way one person can come to represent an entire channel or network, as Alistair Cook came to be the face of PBS, though he hosted only two shows, "Masterpiece Theater" and "America." For nearly thirty years, CBS News was certified by the presence of Walter Cronkite, while Garrison Keillor's mellow baritone, for many, is the aural "face" of public radio.

During its early years, the cable channel, Arts and Entertainment, had no face, and the channel itself had no character. Though it was a good idea to have a commercial alternative to the art programming of PBS, A&E's endless recycling of what seemed to be the same nine or ten ballets and operas soon let viewers know that the wide and deep world of the arts wasn't going to be surveyed or plumbed. Worse, those endless repeats of "Murder, She Wrote," "Columbo," and "MacMillan and Wife," originally meant as mere filler between the artistic events, soon threatened to become the main bill of fare. A&E was fast turning into a rival sibling of Nick at Night!

But sometime in the late 1980s, a shift in A&E's scheduling signaled that something was happening behind the scenes. Suddenly, A&E was featuring countless documentaries about tanks, guns, aircraft, missiles, bombs. These were invariably hosted by George C. Scott (A&E executive to underlings: "We gotta get Patton!"), who negotiated his pot belly and grizzling beard around innumerable planes and tanks while reciting statistics in a gravelly voice soaked in boredom. Was the Arts and Entertainment channel now becoming the Art of War channel? In any event, it was clear that A&E was having the media equivalent of a nervous breakdown. But sometimes a nervous breakdown precedes genuine transformation.

And what a strange transformation it turned out to be, and what an unexpected face that transformation came to wear. The face belonged to Bill Kurtis, once featured in CBS's weekday morning programming. He has helped create at least six shows for the A&E channel: "American Justice," which deals with famous American criminal cases; "City Confidential," recounting juicy crimes in deceptively placid cities; "Closed Case Files," which demonstrates how detectives finally crack long unsolved crimes; and "Investigative Reports," which is in the process of spawning two "strands," "Investigative Report: Criminal Justice" and "Investigative Report: Special Edition." All of them deal with a cornucopia of social and legal problems: the death penalty, obesity in kids, you name it. Does Kurtis ever sleep?



Though Kurtis possesses a handsome, graying, glowering countenance that might have been ordered up by central casting for the part of the heavy father who tells his bohemian son to forget about that loft in Greenwich Village, he himself must have more than a touch of the artist in him, since only a would-be actor could host a show so hammily. As he marshals the facts of the case, we get a quick run-through of the whole D.A. repertory: the hawk-like glare, the arched eyebrow, the sardonic smile, the self-righteous set of the jaw, the stabbing index finger, the dismissive back of the hand, all of which coax the audience into thinking of itself as a jury, Kurtis as the D.A., and the documentary that follows as a sort of trial.

And, like a trial, each show follows a strict format: After the introduction, some newsreel montage sketches in the background of a crime or social problem, then zeros in on the protagonists. Various witnesses are at hand: politicians, reporters, detectives, judges, lawyers. All interviews are done in the style that was perhaps inspired by Warren Beatty's *Reds*, brought to perfection by Ken Burns on his PBS epics, and has by now become standard on every TV documentary. The speakers are all shot in close-up against a neutral background, their names and professions announced by captions a few seconds after they've begun speaking. The interlocutors are never heard and don't have to be since the interviewees are caught only when they are in full flow and don't need any prompting. So everyone questioned comes across as an accomplished storyteller.

And this is exactly as it should be, for despite Kurtis's prosecutorial air and the journalistic titles of his shows, what we have here are examples of slick storytelling, and not at all the sort of investigative documentary once done decades ago by Edward R. Murrow on CBS and now seen on PBS's "Frontline," which digs up overlooked facts and tries

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to bring about political and social reform. "CBS Reports" and "Frontline" are the television descendants of Lincoln Steffens, but "Investigative Reports" and its ilk are the TV equivalents of the true-crime books so popular in recent decades. They don't demand justice because justice has already been done, or is about to be done. The host's pretentious huffiness assures you that the blindfolded lady holding the scales is not only implacable and inescapable but—by gad, sir!—puts on a damn fine show. This is documentary as pure entertainment, almost completely liberated from its muckraking, reformative origins.

"City Confidential" is by far my favorite because it wears its sensationalism on its sleeve. Instead of Kurtis, the actor Paul Winfield narrates, and it is Winfield's vocal persona, an unholy amalgamation of Bayou pirate, inner-city tough, and weary police detective, that gives "Confidential" much of its tangy cynicism. Each installment begins with a potted history of the city in question and, as written, this segment is rather neutral. But, hearing Winfield, you'd swear you were listening to a chamber-of-commerce pamphlet rewritten by H.L. Mencken and the Marquis de Sade. The lazily sneering drawl of the offscreen narrator keeps nudging the viewer, "Oh, you think your neighbors are just law-abiding citizens going about their business, do you? Well chump, let's you and me peep through a few windows on Main Street together." And, while Kurtis's other programs feature interviews with earnest attorneys and politicians, "City Confidential" brings bartenders, schoolteachers, realtors, and housewives into the witness box, all of them happy to tell the camera that, yes, they knew all along it was the young minister who did in the pregnant showgirl, and, oh yes indeed, everyone always thought it was the mayor who'd bumped off that irritating councilwoman. That's what I love about "City Confidential." It's like being in a barbershop buzzing with gossip about the murder case being tried in the courthouse across the street.

A&E seems to be flourishing now and, because it is, there's more money to pour into big film projects (often in collaboration with British television). The results have been decidedly mixed: a superb dramatization of the bestseller *Longitude*; solid middlebrow entertainment with the Horatio Hornblower series and the adaptations of the Hercule Poirot, Spencer and Nero Wolf detective stories; a coy and entirely misfired series about Hollywood in the 1940s; pale, boring adaptations of Jane Austen, Dickens, and all the usual Victorian suspects, although the recent show about Victoria herself and her acquisition of throne and husband was a thoroughly absorbing little valentine. The one review of the arts, "Breakfast with the Arts," every Sunday morning, often has nice chamber music and a couple of OK interviews with musicians, actors, and museum curators plugging their latest projects. But there's no "Lunch" or "Dinner with the Arts."

The real A&E flagship shows are the Kurtis productions and, of course, the "Biography" series, a project so good and so bad and so exfoliating that it needs and will get an article unto itself. But what the investigative shows and "Biography" have in common is that they have all tapped into the public's fascination with real life packaged as slick drama, even as soap opera. That fascination has always existed but was exacerbated by the Watergate affair, specifically by its amazingly complete and satisfying dramatic arc—its obscure, sinister beginning (a nocturnal burglary), its amazing development and outrageous cast of characters, and its thumpingly dramatic finish with Nixon boarding that plane and waving goodbye. How could fiction compete with such lurid and satisfyingly shaped reality?

But artists insist on making their own reality, and bend mere facts to serve the artistic vision. So, how odd it is that a channel created for arts programming has finally established itself by feeding off the headlines of yesterday and today? A&E's slogan is "Escape the Ordinary." With due respect to the undeniable entertainment that both the channel and Kurtis provide, I think a better slogan would be, "Escape the Imaginary." □

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Critics' choices for Christmas

Peter Kavanagh

Peter Kavanagh is senior producer with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's radio current-affairs programs "This Morning" and "The Sunday Edition."

The temper of our times often makes our reading choices for us. A wall of new books, and the eye and mind are drawn in directions both obvious and mysterious. It's the mysterious choices that speak loudly of who we are and what we need. In North America this fall, reading has become a refuge, a solace, a form of mental and spiritual defense, as well as a pleasure.

Rudy Wiebe is a Canadian Mennonite whose first novel nearly forty years ago dealt with the question of pacifism in the face of an implacable enemy. Set in World War II, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* has just been republished (Knopf Vintage Canada, $18.95 Can.). Weibe's latest and fifteenth novel, *Sweeter Than All the World* (Knopf Canada, $34.95 Can., 436 pp.), returns to the same themes: how to respond to evil, why evil happens, what choices good people have. The novel tells the story of Adam Wiebe, a modern man faced with a life rich in material goods and desperately short on moral ones. He embarks on a journey to find the means to be good. He travels the world seeking out the stories of his ancestors as they moved throughout Europe looking for a safe place to be "defenseless Christians." The novel, a coming-of-age story of a man wrestling with a long midlife crisis, is steeped in Mennonite lore and history.

During a dark and gloomy autumn, J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and precursor novel, *The Hobbit* (Houghton Mifflin, boxed set, $45, 1,800 pp.) could be renamed *Hobbit for Our Time*. These perennial favorites are dominating the bookstores in advance of the release of the big-screen adaptation. This classic meditation on the forces of darkness and the struggle to contain them makes the heart glad and the nerves tingle. Because it is so rich in learned lore, the series has always been susceptible to layered reading. It has been interpreted as a commentary on Nazism and World War II, a treatise on environmental degradation, and an extended reflection on modernity. Today it can be read as a classic assessment of a fateful struggle between good and evil. Or it can be simply enjoyed as a rollicking good read.

Must difficult times make us harder, more resentful, and afraid? Or might it be possible to learn to be softer, more open, more compassionate? Those are the questions posed by Buddhist nun Pema Chodron in *The Places That Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times* (Shambhala, $21.95, 144 pp.). Born in the United States, Chodron resides at Gampo Abbey in Cape Breton, Canada. Hers is a quiet guide to steeling the spirit while seeking the calm. Her meditative prose quietly argues that, demanding as the emotions can be, they do not shape us inevitably. We can decide how to live.

It's the hundredth anniversary of the serialized publication of Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (Signet, $4.95, 256 pp.). Sherlock Holmes's dedication to reason, above all else, entrances the mind and strengthens the spirit. A menacing atmosphere, one of Doyle's most excellently drawn, is oddly enough an antidote to today's climate of vague and precise terrors. The moor evolves from geological hazard into a metaphor for dark thoughts and evil deeds. Doyle, the reluctant master of the detective story, demonstrates here the power of the genre. The comfort quotient is entirely derived from familiar tropes and the inevitable rebalancing of the social order.

Billy Collins's *Sailing Alone Around the Room: New and Selected Poetry* (Random House, $21.95, 172 pp.) is the newest collection by the new American Poet Laureate. The range of interest, the play of language, and the laughter, quiet the mind. Collins, often criticized for his "accessibility," demonstrates in poem after poem the role poetry has long played as balm. Poetry, as Collins says, teaches us about ourselves. In this collection he teaches me that the great pleasures come from quiet, ordinary moments:

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from music, our dogs, simple days.

Reading anything these days is complicated. It requires time. And, as with everything else, the question lurks: Is this the best use of time when time seems too short and too precious? But reading is a vital part of what makes many of us who we are. Paradoxically, because reading changes us, and change has proven to be one of the few constants, hanging on to who we are can often be centered in the turning of pages.

Richard Cohen

Richard Cohen is a freelance book editor and writer. His book on the history of swordplay will be published by Random House in 2002.

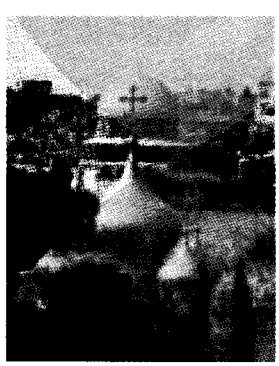
I asked the priest in front of me in the bank line what book he'd recommend from his reading this year. His answer surprised me and sent me off to read *The Mountain of Silence* by Kyriacos C. Markides (Doubleday, $22.95, 256 pp.). The book is a personal journey to the monasteries high in the Troodos Mountains of Cyprus and is a mixture of travelogue, history, reflections, and conversations—many with Father Maximos, one of the monks from Mount Athos, the subject of a previous study by Markides, *Riding with the Lion*. Maximos makes an engaging spiritual Dr. Johnson, a source of humor as well as spiritual insight. At one juncture in their travels the author is on the point of learning the real nature of prayer, and pushes his mentor for an answer. Maximos pauses. "It's getting late," he says, and the next minute is off home, back down the mountain. Markides gets his insight, but much later, when his wily companion decides the time is right. This is a book I would normally have left untouched, but it is thoroughly engaging, always instructive, and not a little wise.

Less beguiling but just as thought-provoking (and maybe ideal reading when waiting one's turn at the bank) is *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression*, by Andrew Solomon (Scribner, $28, 569 pp.). This National Book Award winner encompasses the literary and scientific history of the disease, as well as charting the author's own battles, in sometimes greater detail than one needs, but always in an engrossing way. "I have never written on any subject about which so many people have so much to say," says Solomon, a regular *New Yorker* contributor, and he includes many personal stories besides his own. Acedia, lethargy of spirit, was once described by Dorothy Sayers as the worst of all sins, because it was the negation of all things. "The opposite of depression," writes Solomon, "is not happiness but vitality." Considering its subject, a remarkably addictive and invigorating history.

When lying in bed in the mornings, not depressed but happily lazy and only half awake, I used to daydream about famous moments in history, and insert myself into them—having a drink in a Parisian café as my friends stormed the Bastille, or plotting my last hours in the Alamo, or my days as page to Henry VIII. This may be one reason why I was delighted finally to catch up with Ann Wroe's wonderful study *Pontius Pilate* (Modern Library, $14.95, 412 pp.), first published in 1999. The book is not just a recreation of Pilate but a history of how we have seen him over two thousand years. "That strange amalgam of human struggling and human failing," as Wroe calls him, Pilate is difficult to write about because we know so little about him. Or so it has seemed till now; the marvel of this biography is that it brings the great skeptic to life with the skills of a novelist yet in a way that never makes one feel that the existing evidence is being strained, enabling us to get the feel of a man "actually walking on a marble floor in Caesarea, feeling his shoes pinch, clicking his fingers for a slave, while clouds of lasting infamy gather overhead."

"This is the look of truth: Layered and elusive." The lines apply to all the books I have mentioned, but they actually appear in Anne Carson's latest book of poetry, *The Beauty of the Husband: A Fictional Essay in 29 Tangos* (Alfred A. Knopf, $22, 146 pp.). The poems are about a failed marriage, one imagines Carson's own, although this is never explicitly stated. One might think that after recommending a study of depression, a series of twenty-nine free-verse poems on the pain and destructiveness of a relationship gone wrong is piling it a bit thick, but this is a glorious and enthralling book. A meditation on beauty (via the husband's) and truth (which so often he ignored), it spreads out to examine erotic memory, how to live with moral ambiguity, the nature of marriage. Throughout, John Keats plays a supporting role. As Carson, a professor of classics at McGill University in Montreal, writes, "some tangos pretend to be about women but look at this." This is not self-pity, but self-examination writ large.

Anne Carson and her husband separated (at least, in the physical sense) more than twenty years ago. Viktor Frankl, famously the author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, married Elly Schwindt, a woman half his age, in 1947. *When Life Calls Out to Us*, by Haddon Klingberg Jr. (Doubleday, $23.95, 368 pp.), is the story of that marriage, and also of how Frankl's writings came to be. The author is a clinical psychologist and pro-



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fessor of psychology, and his writing style does not sing; but the story he has to tell is so interesting that it doesn't matter. Frankl died in 1997, aged ninety-two. Twenty-two years before, he and his wife had an audience with Paul VI. As they were about to leave the room, the pope said to them, in German, "Please, pray for me." Frankl was astounded: "Imagine the pope asking a psychiatrist, coming from Vienna, Jewish, to pray for him!" Reading this fond biography, one can see why the pope asked.

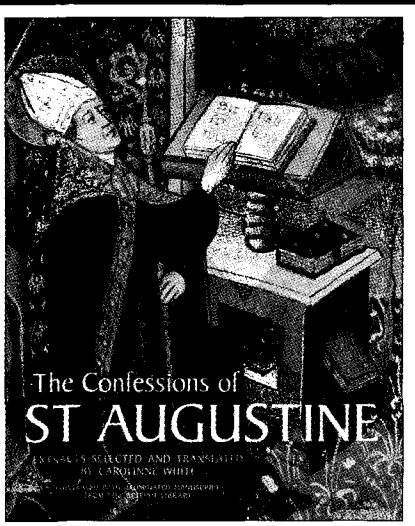
Anita Mathias

Anita Mathias, a regular contributor, lives in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Salman Rushdie's dazzling, densely textured maximilist novel, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (Picador USA, $16, 575 pp.) tracks the brilliant rock stars, Ormus Cama and Vina Apsara, a contemporary Orpheus and Eurydice, through three great cities, Bombay, London, and, inevitably, New York; and through the familiar story of fame, desperately pursued, turning out to be less delicious than imagined, leading to paranoid, reclusive misery. Though Rushdie's characters are often mere embodiments of an idea—Vina, like the painter Aurora in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (Pantheon), incarnates the destructive concept of the artist as sacred monster, sacrificing morality, decency, and love for art—I found myself moved by the dumb, stoic suffering of Ormus Cama, an immensely gifted musician who wanted nothing more than calm married love, but loved the wrong woman for that life. *The Ground* offers vintage Rushdie: his erudition and humor; his magpie allusiveness and multicultural jokes; the lyricism, playfulness, and sheer plenitude of his style; and his trademark ricocheting between the sublime and the silly, popular culture and high art, all incarnated in the voice of the narrator, Rai, ostensible friend of Ormus, and Vina's secret lover. "An everything novel," Rushdie calls *The Ground*. Finally, in an uncharacteristic and Shakespearean peaceful conclusion, after the mythic figures of Vina and Ormus vanish—Vina dies in an earthquake, and Ormus is shot dead by Vina's ghost in a tiresome flash of magical realism I wish Rushdie would abandon—the lesser artists, the photographer, Rai, and the popular singer Mira Celano, settle down to a life of mutual accommodation and domestic happiness.

The Death of Vishnu (W.W. Norton, $24.95, 256 pp.), a first novel by Manil Suri, a professor of mathematics at the University of Maryland, presents five rambunctious families in an apartment building in Bombay, squabbling over the expenses of the dying (in the cosmos of the novel, reincarnating) janitor, Vishnu. Suri gives us a dead-on and hilarious portrayal of the melodramatic quarrels of the materialistic Asranis and Pathaks, and the simmering pettiness and viciousness engendered by a claustrophobically close society. In a conscious imitation of the progress of the

THE CONFESSIONS OF ST. AUGUSTINE



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soul in Hindu theology, the higher floors of the apartment building house the more evolved. These include Muslim Mr. Jalal, who desperately seeks the common truth underlying all religions (and, in a chilling scene, is lynched by a Hindu mob when his son elopes with the Asranis' daughter), and the widower, Vinod Taneja, who has loosened all cords of desire. Though the dying Vishnu's hallucinatory memories of love and the Hindu myths feel tacked-on and obtrusive, the book is a sprightly, realistic, funny portrait of lower-middle class Indian life and its pretensions.

The polished, elegant surfaces of Jhumpa Lahiri's 2000 Pulitzer Prize-winning volume of nine short stories, *An Interpreter of Maladies* (Houghton Mifflin, $12, 198 pp.) belie the howling emptiness at their depths. In her carefully observed, minimalist tales, Indian immigrants discover the nightmarish price of the American dream of lots of stuff. Strangers in a strange land, imperfectly understanding, imperfectly understood, missing their community-oriented society, they wrestle with unfamiliar New World problems—loneliness, depression, and isolation which destabilize the marriages that, in at least five stories, agonizingly disintegrate. In a savage story, "A Temporary Matter," a suffering couple, Shoba and Shukumar, tell each other erstwhile secrets, and we watch them steadily, viciously destroy each other as they face the death of their love and marriage. "Mr. Pirzada" and "Mrs. Sen" present Indian faculty couples, alienated and adrift in a foreign world. More restfully, the final story, "The Third and Final Continent," details the not uncommon odyssey of the restless Indian (like Lahiri's and my own and, it's rumored, Rushdie's) from India through England to America; and the advent of love within the confines of an arranged marriage.

An Artist of the Floating World (Vintage International, $12, 206 pp.), a slender, perfect novel by the British-Japanese writer Kazuo Ishiguro, explores the stream of consciousness of a self-deceived man in postwar Japan (reminiscent of Stevens, the butler in Ishiguro's better-known, poignant *The Remains of the Day*). In fascinating sections, Masuji Ono, an artist dedicated to depicting the *ukiyoe*, "the floating world" of "the nightless city" of the pleasure district, pours himself into his art, painting fifteen-hour days as a student, and later as a sensei, a master. Later, exposed to Japan's poverty, he asks the age-old question of the moral artistic spirit: Isn't making art unconscionable in a world of pain? Consequently, he betrays his gift, and supports the Imperial Japanese armies. After Hiroshima, he faces a Japan craving amnesia, with the militarist faction shunned, and an epidemic of public harakiri, honor suicides. In imagistic dreamy sections, Ono reflects on his life, unable to face the tragedy of betraying his gifts, his promise, his joy for chimerical ideals, yet finding hope in the buoyancy of the young in the new Japan. Part of the novel's pleasure lies in decoding Ono's classic unreliable narrative, and the Japanese façade of invincible politeness. Ishiguro is a stunning writer with absolutely perfect pitch. His flawless novel, suffused with sadness and beauty, has the delicacy and restraint of the *ukiyoe* prints of the moon, cherry blossoms, migrating birds, and dreamy geishas with their admirers, sipping away all sorrow.

Lucy Lethbridge

Lucy Lethbridge is literary adviser of the London Tablet.

It's not often that you come across a book that you know you will keep close by you always, a friend and guide for life. Alban McCoy's *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Catholicism* (Continuum, $24.95, 136 pp.) is, for me, just that. The title (and slim size) suggests that this is a brisk, consolidating run through familiar themes. But you couldn't get a more intelligent guide than the Reverend McCoy (Catholic chaplain at Cambridge University), and his book is full of surprises. At every turn he challenges complacency and makes ancient wisdom fresh, exciting—and reassuring, too.

Divided into four parts, "Common Questions," "The Ten Commandments," "The Seven Deadly Sins," and "The Virtuous Life," McCoy's essay is clear but not didactic—and although he tackles difficult theological subjects (never talking down) one feels immeasurably expanded by what he has to say. Take, for example, the seven deadly sins and the theological virtues: He examines each in turn (pride, sloth, envy, and avarice he calls the "cold-hearted respectable sins," and gluttony and lust, the "warm-hearted disreputable" ones) and shakes them up, makes them vivid, modern, and (to use a term I suspect he would dislike) "relevant." Sloth, for example, often masquerades as workaholicism—spiritual inactivity hiding behind feverish rushing about; gluttony is a virtue distorted; pride is "the sin of the solipsist." And then he takes faith and hope, and quotes Augustine—"love and do what you will"—because behind everything else in this wise book, the theme is "human flourishing."

Biographies generally sit reproachfully on my bookshelf. I'm afraid I am a dipper, flicking through the pictures, checking the index for scandalous bits, looking to see what happens at the end. This year, however, I immensely enjoyed two lives and read them through. The

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first, by Edward Fox, has the virtue of being an elegantly written but very slender ninety-five pages, one of a series of bite-size lives launched this year by Short Books. Fox tells the fascinating story of *Alexander Csoma de Koros (1784–1842): The Hungarian Who Walked to Heaven* (Short Books, $8.95).

Csoma, born a peasant in a Transylvanian village, made it his life's work to trace the mysterious origins of the Hungarian people to Central Asia and Tibet. Csoma is quite simply an extraordinary figure. In his thirties, he walked from Hungary to the Himalayas, mastering seventeen languages on the way and disciplining mind and body to the limit, living off little more than boiled rice and tea, and walking everywhere when he wasn't poring over texts from the vast library of Tibetan literature. Isolated, single-minded, and frugal to the point of self-indulgence, Csoma was sustained only by a voracious desire to add to the store of his knowledge. He never made it to Lhasa, Tibet's forbidden capital, but getting there wasn't the point. As Fox demonstrates, Csoma's "heaven," his destination, was always a metaphorical rather than a real place.

The other life I enjoyed is longer and also about a traveler, though of a different style. *Henry Salt: Artist, Traveller, Diplomat, Egyptologist* by Deborah Manley and Peta Ree (Libri, $24.95, 304 pp.), is the story of the British consul general in Cairo in the early nineteenth century. This is the best kind of biography—the authors feel an intense sympathy for their subject and his times.

Trained as a painter, Salt was an indolent youth and seems to have fallen into his adventures by accident: invited to voyage with Lord Valentia to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) he became a friend of a bloodthirsty warlord, the Ras of Tigre. He fetched up in Cairo under the rule of Pasha Mehmet Ali who had chased the Mamlukes from the city they had ruled for five centuries. It was a remarkable time to be in Egypt, when ancient splendors lay buried under centuries of sand and many of the antiquities Salt collected now form the basis of the British Museum collection. Salt is modest, self-deprecating, and courageous—unjustly outshone by the more colorful characters who swept across the horizon of his time.

Housekeeping is an unfashionable activity, so I felt a pang of contemporary guilt at enjoying quite so much Cheryl Mendelson's *Home Comforts* (Scribner, $35, 884 pp.)—an exhaustive volume of excellent tips on the kinds of domestic skills lost to my generation, such as darning or pickling fruit. I don't suppose I will ever get down to either darning or pickling, but it is comforting to know that Mendelson is at hand should I want to. It is true that *Home Comforts* smacks of neurosis: I generally take the English view (this book is extremely rude about English standards of hygiene so I am on the defensive here) that a few germs are good for building up healthy immunity, but Mendelson's dirt-zapping energy is awesome. She even tackles the furniture of the mind, dispensing advice on what kind of books a household might fruitfully give space to. On these matters, I would rather put my trust in Father McCoy, but with *The Intelligent Person's Guide to Catholicism* at one end of the bookshelf and *Home Comforts* at the other I feel set up for life.

Finally, I'd like to put in a mention for a book which has already proved invaluable. If, like me, you are someone who rarely goes to the opera, hugely enjoys it when you get there, but feels a sneaking suspicion that you don't quite get what it's all about, then Robert Thicknesse's *Opera Notes* (HarperCollins, $13.95, 192 pp.) is the perfect guide. Thicknesse, the *Times* (of London) opera critic, has produced a slim volume containing a brisk run-through of 190 operas, including a plot summary, a neat paragraph on music and words, and some interesting background facts too. Just the thing to pep up flagging conversation in the interval. And I no longer have to fidget around in the gloom, angling the program into a beam of light to find out what's going on. It hasn't exactly changed my life but it has certainly enhanced it.

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Mary Lee Freeman

Mary Lee Freeman is a palliative-care nurse practitioner and former Commonweal *intern.*

Four years ago in these pages I recommended the works of David James Duncan, *The Brothers K, The River Why,* and *River Teeth* (December 5, 1997). Duncan's new and first purely nonfiction work, *My Story as Told by Water* (Sierra Club, $25, 295 pp.), is a National Book Award nominee. It has a subtitle that is nearly a review unto itself: *Confessions, Druidic Rants, Reflections, Bird-Watchings, Fish-Stalkings, Visions, Songs and Prayers Refracting Light, from Living Rivers, in the Age of the Industrial Dark.* He's lost some of you already, hasn't he? Granted, Duncan does rant. Granted, he's been known to write the occasional sentence requiring a dozen or more commas—sentences the ends of which, once reached, are capped not by merciful periods but by pleading exclamation points. But Jeremiah ranted, so too Amos, and neither of those boys had even a speck of Duncan's humor. An eloquent nature writer, Duncan uncovers and articulates the many-layered truth of pressing environmental issues, whether they be federal mining policy or Columbia and Snake River dam-breaching, or a host of other concerns.

In April, W.R. Grace & Company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection due to an accumulation of asbestos-related lawsuits. That prompted a rereading of Jonathan Harr's *A Civil Action* (Vintage/Random House, $13, 502 pp.), winner of the National Book Critics' Circle Award for Nonfiction in 1995. Those who have not read the story of the mid-1980s suit filed against the W.R. Grace and Beatrice companies on behalf of families of a cluster of leukemic children in Woburn, Massachusetts, can still correct that oversight. (Watching the movie doesn't count.)

Readers of *JAMA*, a.k.a. the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, can probably be divided into two camps:

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those who first read the humanities features—the poem, Molly Southgate's essay about the cover art, and the "A Piece of My Mind" column—and those who head straight to the scientific research articles. I count myself in the former camp, finding the humanities a fitting entrée into the world of medical research.

"A Piece of My Mind" essays are usually—but not always—penned by physicians. Health care in the trenches contains an embarrassment of riches for a physician *cum* storyteller: an endless array of new and unique characters, a good many of them seeking out physicians when the plot of their life stories has undergone a decided twist. Indeed, as Roxanne Young, the editor of this eponymous second collection of essays points out (*A Piece of My Mind*, AMA Press, $34, 332 pp.), the practice of medicine "is suffused with narrative"—from the initial account by the patient of his or her illness to the translation of that account into a clinical narrative of the disease and the practitioner's attempts to alter its trajectory. Essays which do justice to the raw reality of the practice of medicine without courting melodrama are not so easy to craft. Those in this collection avoid that courtship. Read too many in one sitting, though, and—sated—you'll find yourself thinking that having to wait two weeks between *JAMA*s is not such a bad fate.

In the days following the tragedies of September 11, I reread the chapter "A Moral Response to Terrorism" in James Tunstead Burtchaell's 1989 collection of essays and book reviews titled *The Giving and Taking of Life: Essays Ethical* (Notre Dame, $34, 324 pp.). Burtchaell's terrorism essay first appeared in 1986, and fifteen years later retains its power. Beginning with a cogent and nuanced attempt to clarify what terrorism is—and leaving seven accepted definitions in his wake—Burtchaell proceeds to make the case for the indispensability of sophisticated political and historical contextualization. Burtchaell takes the measure of counterterrorism according to the five traditional "just war" requirements, and ends with a discussion of the goal of counterterrorism as being peace rather than capitulation. "A Moral Response to Terrorism" is but one of ten essays and six book reviews in this eloquent and considered collection.

Bracing nonfiction requires tempering. For me, tempering is best achieved by reaching for the poetry of the late Jane Kenyon. I have given copies of *Otherwise: New and Selected Poems* (Graywolf Press, $16, 230 pp.) as Christmas gifts to four different people in the last four years. This year I'll make it five in five because of lines in poems like "With the Dog at Sunrise," in which Kenyon contemplates what words of condolence she might send a thirty-one-year-old widow: "I look at the lithe, pink trees more carefully,/remembering Stephen, the photographer./With the hunger of two I take them in."

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Paul Q. Kane

Paul Q. Kane is Commonweal*'s business manager.*

The Kanes "were Roosevelt Republicans and then Roosevelt Democrats," my father used to say. From a broad-brush opening like that, he'd go directly into minute details, and bring to life some aspect of our family history. People, places, decisions made in a different time and place, all these became vivid and immediate in the spell of his stories.

Reading David McCullough's *John Adams* (Simon and Schuster, $35, 751 pp.) reminded me of sitting at the kitchen table listening to my Dad. In this best-selling biography, McCullough transports readers to the domestic and national dramas of the late eighteenth century. When people think of John Adams, if at all, they remember him as the one-term, second president who was involved in the American Revolution, and who wrote a lot of letters to his wife Abigail. But McCullough introduces a real family (the book is as much about the Adams clan as it is about John), making real choices and sacrifices for revolutionary events that had no definitive outcome.

John and Abigail Adams had strong opinions and feelings, which they expressed in the intimacy of letters. John worked hard to learn French for his diplomatic mission to Paris, and found his fellow diplomat, Benjamin Franklin, lazy but charming. John and Abigail's long separations left them both feeling lonely. McCullough uses the letters to paint vivid pictures of the key people involved in the early republic, among them Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton who with political ruthlessness successfully developed the American economy as Treasury secretary. Seldom would I describe a historical biography as gripping, but this one works on so many levels that I finished it in only a few days.

Most successfully, McCullough makes history accessible to a general audience in a way which might inform and direct our democracy. Adams's world, as much as our own, was filled with great change, political infighting, and intrigue. As president, John Adams signed into law the Anti-Sedition Act when the United States entered an undeclared sea war with France. The law was pushed by his own Federalist Party to keep their Republican opponents in check, under the guise of protecting the United States from subversives. It was not the president's finest moment. Certainly it provides a cautionary tale about leadership under the conditions of war, and consequent threats to civil liberties.

Like many things really old, dinosaurs are a recent discovery. The people who made the discovery and began the classification of dinosaurs experienced wonder and awe about these creatures' size, variety, and ultimate extinction. Deborah Cadbury's *Terrible Lizard: The First Dinosaur Hunters and the Birth of a New Science* (Henry Holt and Company, $27.50, 374 pp.) tells about those early days of

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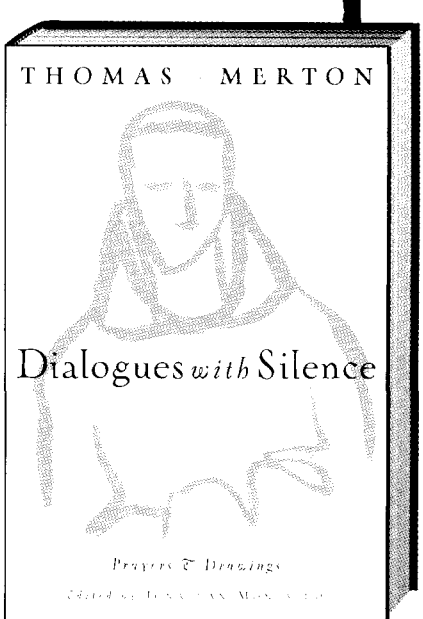

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dinosaur study, just before the controversies of evolution were to galvanize sectors of religious faith and science.

Cadbury begins her story in 1812 on the coast of England where Mary Anning (of "She sells sea shells by the seashore" tongue-twister fame) spent much of her life walking the shore near her hometown of Dorset, collecting and selling petrified curios to tourists, in order to support her family. On one excursion, she discovered the fossil of an unknown crocodile-like creature which raised the interest of scholars in the developing field of geology. Some of their hypotheses seem ludicrous in light of later discoveries, but others, such as Gideon Mantell's theory of seventy-foot dinosaurs, based only on small skeletal remains, were fairly accurate. Cadbury portrays well the dinosaur pioneers' struggles for knowledge, fame, and influence, as well as their lasting contributions.

Because of the Jody and Mary Attard case, much ink has been spilled recently on the ethical and ontological questions posed by conjoined twins. Conjoined twins were once referred to as Siamese twins, after the nationality of Chang and Eng Bunker, who lived from 1811 to 1874. Born into a world where modern surgery was just beginning to take shape, these two men (conjoined at the hip and sharing a stomach) lived not only under the scrutiny of the emerging medical profession, but also in an era of traveling "freak shows." Darin Strauss's novel, *Chang and Eng* (Dutton, $13, 323 pp.), faithfully portrays the twins' cultural context and its assumptions even as it reflects contemporary notions of privacy and identity.

The few known facts about Chang and Eng are the stuff of pulp fiction. They were born along the Mekong River in what is now known as Thailand, traveled to the United States, were placed on display in various world-traveling road shows, and eventually settled in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, during the Civil War, as pig farmers. There they married sisters and fathered twenty-one—yes, twenty-one—children between them.

Strauss tells their story from the point of view of Eng, who longs to be separate from Chang, envies his brother's seeming ability to accept their lot in life, and struggles with being on tour and display. Separation is impossible, as doctors repeatedly determine that severing the band uniting the stomach they share would lead to their deaths. Readers will sympathize with Eng as he expresses thoughts such as, "But, my brother, it is my very togetherness with you that ruins everything." What would modern life be without the paradox of seeking full individuality, with its promise of freedom, while simultaneously desiring intimate connection and unity with other human beings? This tension creates good drama, and the book also succeeds in exploring what it means to live well under duress. □

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

work to do something about it" (recovering the sacramental heritage, that is). That someone should be the pastors, theologians, liturgists, musicians, and artists of the Catholic Left.

ROBERT SUPER
Saint Paul, Minn.

Expert opinion

Regarding James Davidson's "Yes, Jesus Is Really There" (October 12), here is a clarification on the presence of Christ in the bread and wine of the Eucharist (if I may prescind for a moment from his presence in the community and in the person of the presiding minister). Transubstantiation is a technical term, and (unlike ordinary words) such terms are defined, which means you have to ask an expert in theology for the definition.

Now here comes the relevant fact: There are *two* definitions. The *first* one is used by Innocent III in 1202 and by the fourth Lateran Council in 1215. It means: the true and total change of bread and wine into Christ's body and blood. Thomas Aquinas knew this definition; the Council of Trent restated it, with the comment that the term is both apt and proper.

The *second* definition comes from Thomas Aquinas's own theological and philosophical analysis, which argues, in Aristotelian terms, that other analyses (namely, impanation and consubstantiation) are mistaken, and that only his own analysis makes sense. Paul VI was to give transfinalization and transsignification a similar treatment, without, however, endorsing Aquinas's analysis and definition of transubstantiation. But this implied that the magisterium has never endorsed Aquinas's theory of transubstantiation—only the two conciliar definitions are Catholic doctrine. If you want to see the whole argument, read James D. McCue's article in *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue* (1967). Just be sure to brush up on your Latin.

(REV.) JOZEF VAN BEECK, S.J.
Chicago, Ill.

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Kept reading

My wife and I are among the people who love *Commonweal* and thank God for its existence. However, I want to join the voices [Correspondence, November 9] of those who can't believe Paul Baumann's treatment of gay issues ("My Son the Boy Scout," October 12). It's like he really doesn't get it. Maybe he takes too seriously the church's putdown language of "intrinsic evil." Who people are, not their behavior, is at the core of concern and the issue of discrimination. And then his use of "polygamous...and other groupings" in the context of the identity of a person struck me as highly insensitive and condescending. In the sixties we had sensitivity training groups for such behavior. Maybe I'm nostalgic for the good old days or, speaking of the unbelievable, maybe I'm becoming even more liberal than *Commonweal*.

Andrew Greeley's article ("A Cloak of Many Colors," November 9) was just what the doctor ordered. Please tell him that his desire for beauty and the good things of our tradition are alive and well at the 11:30 Mass at Old Saint Joseph's in Philadelphia!

I probably should have stopped reading that issue because I could not believe what seemed so prejudiced in the statement by Terrence W. Tilley ("Opposites Detract," November 9) about a "neo-Anglican path, with well-done liturgy and laxity in doctrine and morals..." Gee, some of my best friends are Anglicans, as well as many *Commonweal* writers!

RUSSELL SULLIVAN
Saint Davids, Pa.

Paul Baumann replies:

Equally unbelievable is the way Russell Sullivan willfully misreads my column and my reply to earlier letter writers. I was writing about the legal conundrums raised by the Boy Scouts' actions and same-sex marriage, not about what Sullivan refers to as the "the identity of a person." Doubtless we all need sensitivity training when it comes to this question.

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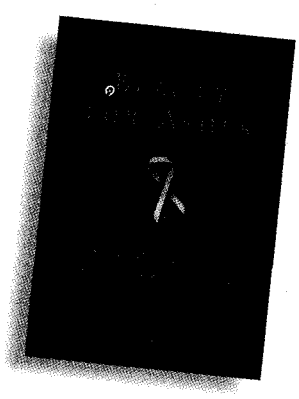

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Dual citizenship

Thank you for publishing Patrick J. Deneen's review ("Monarchy Anyone?" October 26) of my book, *Christian Faith and Modern Democracy* (University of Notre Dame Press).

Deneen rightly notes that my main purpose is to challenge the commonly accepted view that Christianity necessarily requires democracy. Contrary to prevailing opinion, I argue that Christ's distinction between the realms of God and Caesar (and later, Saint Augustine's distinction between the city of God and the earthly city) implies that there is no necessary connection between Christianity and any particular form of government and social order—whether it be monarchy or democracy, socialism or capitalism. Using this distinction, I argue that the forgotten lesson of Christianity is that all the crucial decisions about politics—such as the best form of government, economics, class relations, and war and peace—are judgments of prudence.

Appealing to prudence, I argue that contemporary liberal democracies are not the best regimes for realizing the ends of the temporal realm because they overemphasize personal autonomy and allow rights claims to subvert legitimate authorities (in the family, the church, the school, the military). Moreover, the mass cultures of modern democracies tend to level differences between high and low in society and in the human soul, weakening Christian faith and moral virtue.

In criticizing democracy and human rights in this fashion, however, I do not infer that the American system of government is illegitimate or that constitutional democracies are unworthy of "our best efforts and even our devotion"—as Deneen implies. I am an American patriot, and I appreciate the positive features of constitutional democracy and accept its legitimacy. But I view democracy as a second choice compared to more hierarchical regimes because the missing ingredients in modern mass democracies are the traditional hierarchies that promote the highest aspirations of the human soul. The conclusion I draw is that we must learn to manage the enduring tensions of the earthly and heavenly cities—to live with dual citizenship—rather than demanding a convergence of Christian faith and modern democracy.

ROBERT KRAYNAK
Hamilton, N.Y.

Ensoulment

I read with interest Deacon Kreilkamp's letter to the editor (October 12), in which he states his opinion that ensoulment could occur seven to eight days after conception with the advent of implantation. He brings to point his deaconship (retired) and his medical training (medical internist).

Doctor Kreilkamp's statement, "I believe that this ensoulment occurs only after implantation, some seven to eight days after conception. Our Catholic Church has never issued a definitive statement on the time of ensoulment, and probably never will," raised my eyebrow. The recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 2270 states: "Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception." To me this is a definitive statement if there ever was one. Unless, of course, Kreilkamp does not consider the catechism to be a source of definitive statements for the universal church.

While I understand the good doctor's opinion from a human viewpoint, I was surprised that one so educated and devoted could put this type of misinformation into print.

JAMES C. ANTOS, D.C.
Daytona Beach, Fla.

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FLAGRANT FOUL

Brian Doyle

When someone dies, we mourn the loss of his verve and the stilling of his body, but not so much the way he occupied space; so I sing Tommy Crotty, who was a graceful man, seventy inches tall, murdered on the morning of September 11 in New York City.

His foundation was built in 1958 by the firm of Patricia and Thomas Crotty, senior, formerly of Brooklyn. The final touches to his structure were completed by 1976, and it was an enduring regret to Tommy at that time that he could go no higher, for he was a very fine basketball player, and forwards like me, all of two inches taller, looked down upon him as a species of guard, which is to say a selfish and weak enterprise, content to hog the ball and fling it wildly from safe distances and never venture into the meat market of the lane; but Tommy turned out to be the best and worst kind of guard, for he shared the ball relentlessly, a great virtue, and he was a greedy hawk on defense, a great vice, for he stole our awkward dribbles and fitful passes, and caused ruckus and dismay among our fearful knees. He was never still, always had the ball, zoomed around larger players, never lost his temper, grinned a small grin, was never the star but always the fulcrum and agent of control and change. He never seemed to hurry but he never seemed to be at rest, either—an odd dynamic, a sort of relaxed perpetual motion.

This stays with me.

I went my way and Tommy went his and here and there we would cross paths when back in our home village—after Mass, perhaps, or at someone's mom's funeral. I'd hear his name over the family table, over coffee on the porch, over beer at the beach: Tommy becoming a high school star (Tommy *Crotty*?), Tommy making the Long Island all-star team (which always picks flashy guards, never workmanlike forwards), Tom earning a scholarship to Marist College upstate (*college* ball?), Tom going into finance, Tom married (someone married Tommy?), Tom and his wife having daughters, Tom at Sandler O'Neill on the 104th floor of the south tower of the World Trade Center.

Remember the way he scuttled up and down the floor with the ball?

Yah—his brothers played like that too, like they were crickets on caffeine…

But then one day I am reading the stories of those who are lost, those who are fine gray dust being breathed all over the city, the brothers who washed dishes at Windows on the World, the best aunts in the whole world, the fireman who hilariously cut hair, the boy age eleven flying alone nervous excited to California, the baby from Boston, the priest crushed by debris as he sent a firemen's soul aloft, the man who loved ceramic eagles, and I see

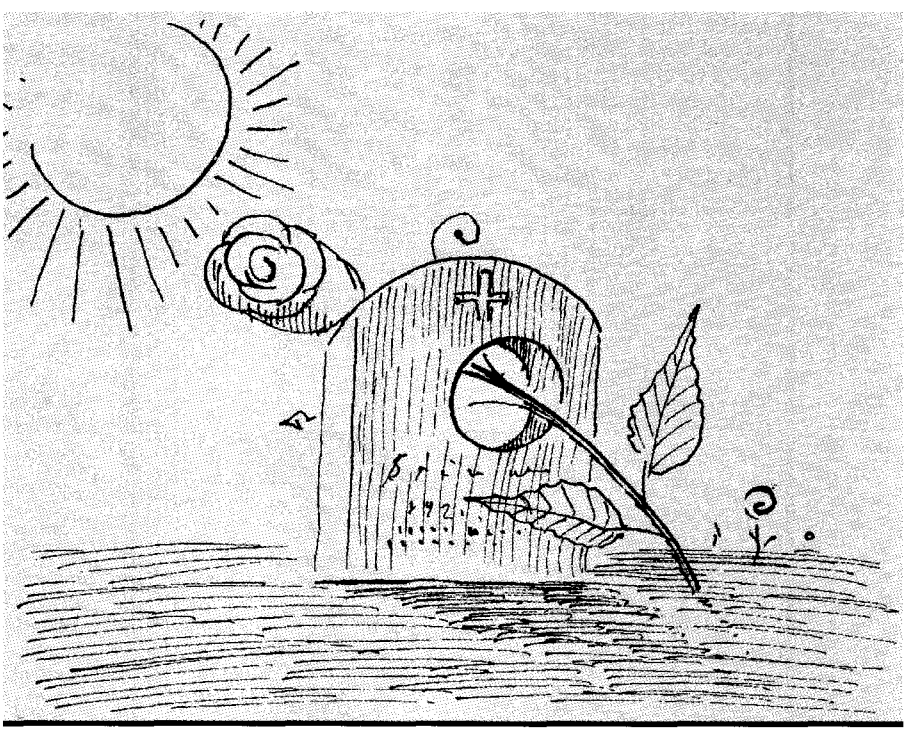
Crotty, Thomas Gerard, 42

and I *see* him swerving along with the ball, sweating gently, wheeling around a pick, whipping a pass inside without stopping his dribble, the meat who gets the ball lurching to the basket and scoring, Tommy grinning (*the meat scored!*) and Tom smoothly almost lazily sliding back upcourt, and then I see his wife sleeping alone in their bed, her hands remembering his sweet weight, the smile of his space.

So what prayer can I speak into the jagged wintry hole where Tommy Crotty used to be?

Only that little grin as he spun to go up court; only the fluid way he spun; only memory as a prayer against murder; only a snarling conviction that the men who killed him must face him; only an unshakable conviction that who he is can never die, no matter how hot the fire. □

Brian Doyle *is the editor of* Portland Magazine *at the University of Portland, and the author of* Credo, *a collection of essays.*



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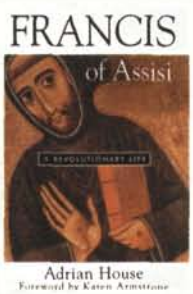

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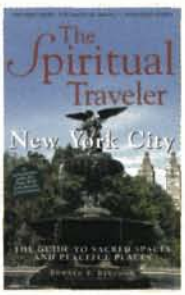

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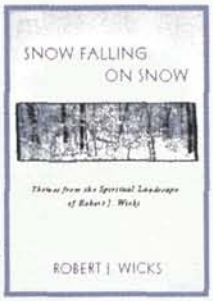

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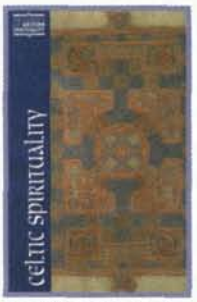

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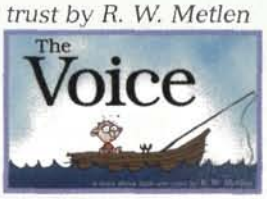

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